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Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8219th meeting
Friday, 30 March 2018, 7.40 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Van Oosterom	(Netherlands)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Lie Cheng
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Dah
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Woldegerima
	France	Mr. Michon
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mr. Miller

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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The meeting was called to order at 7.40 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: I propose that the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of the observer State Palestine to the United Nations to participate in this meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in that regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Acting Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I refer to note S/2017/507 and encourage members and non-members of the Council to limit their statements to five minutes or less, and the briefer to the agreed time limit.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zerihoun.

Mr. Zerihoun: As Council members know, today's March of Return near the Gaza fence has, unfortunately, resulted in violence. Based on the information at our disposal, around 30,000 people participated in and around a march at various locations in Gaza. Soon after the demonstration started, the situation deteriorated in several locations. Late afternoon, local time, the Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza confirmed that at least 15 Palestinians had been killed and more than 1,000 had been injured, including by tear gas suffocation. Several of the casualties were reportedly the result of live ammunition used by the Israeli security forces during the march, but also following armed clashes between Palestinian and Israeli security forces, including the shelling of a Hamas observation point.

Reports indicate that most of the demonstrators stayed well away from the border fence and did not engage in violence. However, there are also reports that some protesters engaged in stone throwing and violent behaviour — some reportedly carrying weapons. According to Israeli security forces reports, militants tried to get through the fence in an attempt to plant explosives. Palestinians reportedly also sent a nine-year-old girl across the fence, but Israeli troops were able to send her safely back. Hamas leaders reportedly were also present at some of the gatherings. Prior to the march, Israel had increased its forces around the border, deploying snipers, special units and drones, and sent out warnings that it would act to prevent any breach of the border fence or violation of Israel's sovereignty.

Violence also broke out in the West Bank, with an estimated 900 Palestinians demonstrating, mostly in central West Bank cities, such as Ramallah and Hebron. According to the Palestine Red Crescent Society, 27 Palestinians were wounded during clashes near Nablus.

In his Security Council briefing earlier this week (see S/PV.8214), Special Coordinator Mladenov noted the developing Palestinian plans for today's march, and called on all to exercise restraint and to take the necessary steps to avoid violent escalation. In statements to the media, he reiterated those calls and emphasized the need to ensure that civilians, particularly children, should not be put in harm's way. The Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority (UNSCO) has also engaged with the Israel Defense Forces and Palestinian factions, particularly in Gaza, to reinforce the same messages.

In order to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel, the Department of Safety and Security issued repeated security advisories to all staff. Throughout the day, UNSCO has been in contact with both Palestinian and Israeli security forces and will continue to do so as more demonstrations are expected throughout the next six weeks. There is fear that the situation might deteriorate in the coming days. We will continue to underline that it is imperative that civilians, in particular children, not be targeted and that all actors refrain from putting children at risk at any time. Israel must uphold its responsibilities under international human rights and humanitarian law. Lethal force should be used only as a last resort, with any resulting fatalities properly investigated by the authorities. We therefore also continue to urge Israeli security forces to exercise maximum restraint to avoid casualties.

The developments in Gaza today are another painful reminder of the consequences of a missing

peace between Israel and Palestine and the need to step up our efforts in support of a peaceful resolution of the conflict. As the Secretary-General and the Special Coordinator have repeatedly reminded the Security Council, the United Nations strongly urges Palestinians, Israelis and the international community to take concrete measures to reverse the current course of the conflict and advance the goal of a just and sustainable peace based on the two-State solution.

The President: I thank Mr. Zerihoun for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having swiftly responded and convened this important meeting. We would also like to thank Mr. Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing today.

Four days ago in the Security Council (see S/PV.8214), we heard a briefing by Mr. Nickolay Mladenov on the status of the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), at which he talked about the demonstration that took place today in Gaza. As is usual during the occasions when the defenceless Palestinian people take to the streets to peacefully reaffirm their right to an independent State, we have seen the policy of Israeli arrogance and oppression in action. Today, tens of thousands of brotherly Palestinian people have taken to the streets in Gaza. They have participated in a peaceful demonstration as they do every year on 30 March to commemorate Land Day, express their attachment to their land and their national identity, and underscore their legitimate and inalienable political rights, guaranteed by international treaties, laws and norms.

The Israeli occupation has continued for more than 50 years now. Israel's illegal and illegitimate expansionist activities continue in Palestinian occupied territory, including east Jerusalem. They are flagrant violations of relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2334 (2016).

The State of Kuwait condemns in the strongest terms the Israeli actions today, which have left at least 15 Palestinians dead and more than 1,400 injured. Let us be clear. What happened today was a peaceful demonstration pertaining to the right of defenceless people. This right was responded to with the direct targeting of civilians, in flagrant violation of international human rights law. The perpetrators of today's crime must be brought to justice.

The Palestinian people cannot be an exception to international commitments and international law, including the commitment to protecting civilians from atrocities and grave violations. Israel, the occupying Power, must honour its commitments, in line with the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons. We strongly support international protection for the Palestinian people in the occupied territory, and addressing the practices and policies of the repressive Israeli occupation authority.

It is very important not to separate what happened today from the overall context. The Gaza Strip is still under blockade and has been so for more than 10 years now. Some of those who participated in the demonstration today are refugees who have been negatively impacted by the decrease in contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. What happened today is the result of more than 50 years of occupation. Numerous international reports have reiterated the degree to which living conditions have deteriorated in Gaza. When no response is made to such practices, policies and continued attacks against the defenceless Palestinian people and their legitimate rights, this will be the usual result, and we are definitely going to see more of such distressing incidents. Consequently, and as a first step, we are going to distribute a press statement to the Member States for review and adoption by the Security Council. In fact, as Mr. Zerihoun said, these incidents are a painful reminder of the need to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East as soon as possible.

In conclusion, the State of Kuwait emphasizes the importance of forcing Israel, the occupying Power, to respect and implement the relevant Security Council resolutions. We reiterate that any just and comprehensive peace must be a strategic one, and that in order to achieve it, the entire Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories must end and the Palestinian people be permitted to exercise their inalienable rights. Those rights include the right to establish an independent and full sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, along the borders of 4 June 1967, based on resolutions of international legitimacy and those of the United Nations, the principle of land for peace, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Mr. Miller (United States of America): We note that the representative of Israel is unable to attend today's meeting, owing to the fact that it is taking place during the celebration of Passover. It is extremely unfortunate that Israel is not able to participate in the discussion of this very important matter. It is also vital that the Council take a balanced approach to all matters that come before it, and we should have found an arrangement enabling all the parties to participate this evening.

Turning to the issue of Gaza, we are deeply saddened by the loss of life there today. We urge those involved to take steps to lower tensions and reduce the risk of new clashes. Bad actors who use protests as a cover for inciting violence endanger innocent lives. The international community, including the United States, is focused on taking concrete near-term steps that will improve the humanitarian and economic conditions in Gaza and the lives of the Palestinians living there. We are also hard at work on a plan for peace that will provide a future for both Israel and the Palestinians. Violence furthers neither of those goals.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun for his briefing. We in the Russian Federation are deeply concerned about the tragic events in the Gaza Strip. We are alarmed about the reports of an increase in the number of victims and casualties resulting from the Israeli army's efforts to restrain Palestinian protest actions, which began on 30 March as part of the so-called March of Return in a campaign lasting several days. We call on the Palestinian and Israeli sides to show restraint and to refrain from actions that could result in the deaths of innocent civilians. What is on the agenda is the urgent need to mobilize diplomatic mediation efforts aimed at de-escalating the situation around the Gaza Strip.

We should all understand that it is impossible to resolve the situation by putting out the fires that periodically flare up in the Palestinian territories. The relapses are inevitable and what is needed is a strategy for a settlement. The tragic events going on now make the task of achieving inter-Palestinian reconciliation as soon as possible even more urgent. In cooperation with our regional partners, especially Egypt, we are determined to continue our efforts to unite Palestinians around the political platform of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which we see as essential both for the economic revival of the Gaza Strip and for a practical way to realize the aspirations of the Palestinian people to establish their own independent State, coexisting in peace and security with Israel within internationally recognized borders.

The path to that goal is through convening direct negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis on all final-status issues, including Jerusalem. Any settlement should be based on the generally recognized international legal framework, including the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. We affirm our readiness to provide a Russian platform for a meeting between Palestinian and Israeli leaders. The tragic history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has shown once again that the longer the political process is postponed, the more often unilateral steps are taken that make relaunching it even harder. The Israeli settlement activities in the Palestinian territories, which are contrary to international law, along with provocative rhetoric and violence, are not conducive in any way to creating the conditions for starting direct talks.

It is crucial that we continue to ensure that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) can do its work effectively. We welcome the outcome of the conference held in Rome on 15 March in support of UNRWA, whose budget Russia contributes to regularly. Right now what is especially needed is a well-coordinated effort, every day, on the part of the entire international community. It is important to take action together and at the regional level. In that regard, we note the forthcoming summit of the League of Arab States in Riyadh in April. We hope that its agenda will be genuinely unifying and constructive, designed to overcome the obstacles to political and socioeconomic restoration in the Middle East and North Africa and to develop confidence- and security-building measures for the entire region.

For its part, Russia will continue its efforts to find a way out of the impasse in the long-standing Arab-Israeli conflict and to help to stabilize the situation in the region as a whole. In that regard, the proposal of Russia's Minister for Foreign Affairs Lavrov to conduct a comprehensive Security Council review of the situation in the Middle East, with the aim of identifying areas for joint efforts to stabilize the situation in the region and settle its many crises, old and new, is very relevant.

Mr. Dah (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Acting Under-Secretary-General for

Political Affairs for his briefing on the events happening in Gaza. Needless to say, we are seriously concerned about the gravity of the situation that has led to the loss of lives there. My delegation condemns these acts and urges the parties involved to avoid any escalation of the violence. We want to affirm our principled position on this issue, which is that only through dialogue and political compromise can we find a peaceful solution to the conflict in the region. Once again, we will continue to follow the evolving situation closely and we will definitely comment on it again in the next few days.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I would like to start by agreeing with my colleague from the United States that it is a shame that our Israeli colleagues are unable to participate owing to the start of Passover this evening.

The United Kingdom is appalled by the deaths and injuries suffered during today's events on Gaza's borders. There must be an immediate end to the violence. We call for calm, restraint and respect for international law. All the parties must engage constructively in order to bring an end to the violence.

We have long been concerned about the situation in Gaza and have been warning of the risks of an upsurge in violence. That is not an issue that can simply be managed over the long term. We need an urgent and durable agreement that addresses the underlying causes of the conflict and transforms the situation in Gaza. An agreement should ensure that Hamas and other terrorist groups permanently end rocket fire and attacks against Israel, that the Palestinian Authority resumes control of Gaza and restores effective and accountable governance, and that Israel lifts its restrictions in order to ease the suffering of ordinary Palestinians.

We remain committed to supporting vulnerable Gazans, including through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and we urge all parties to prioritize progress towards reaching a durable solution that alleviates the suffering of the Gazan people, in line with resolution 1860 (2009).

Every Israeli and Palestinian has the right to live in peace and security. We acknowledge both the right of Palestinians to freedom of assembly and protest, as well as the right of Israelis to security. What is needed now is a renewed commitment for negotiations towards a two-State solution. To have the best chance of success, peace must take place in an atmosphere free from violence. It is time for all parties to work together in the spirit of compromise and understanding to make progress towards that two-State solution. The ongoing violence today simply underlines that a just and lasting resolution that ends the occupation and delivers peace for Palestinians and Israelis is long overdue.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): We are appalled by the regrettable loss of life and the large number of wounded today, including children, who all seem to be Palestinian. There must now be an immediate and proper investigation by the authorities. It appears that the Israeli security forces have used live ammunition, which has exacerbated the gravity of the situation. The use of force must always be proportional and lethal force should be used only as a last resort. Israel must uphold its responsibilities under international human rights law and respect the right to peaceful protest. We also note with concern the air strikes carried out by Israel in Gaza.

The situation should not be a surprise to the Council. Special Coordinator Mladenov warned us only a few days ago about the risks of escalating violence in and around Gaza. The situation is extremely worrisome. Our focus must now be on avoiding further violent escalation on the ground. All parties and, in particular, Israeli security forces must exercise maximum restraint.

As we know from previous briefings in the Chamber, the humanitarian situation in Gaza is terrible. Gaza is on the verge of collapse. A sustainable solution must urgently be sought, including an end to the Israeli closure policy. Gaza is an integral part of the State of Palestine and cannot be separated from the broader political context, including the much needed peace efforts leading to a two-State solution.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): We deplore the fact that almost at the end of your presidency, Sir, and following the receptions held on Wednesday and Thursday, we must now call upon you to exercise the role of president in the light of today's incident. Given the urgency of the situation, we thank Kuwait for its initiative and the President for convening today's emergency meeting in response to the grave events in Israel and Palestine.

Equatorial Guinea is paying close attention to the developments surrounding the Great March of Return organized by Palestinian civil society and political organizations, which has resulted in the death of 15 Palestinians and left several injured on the Gaza strip.

We deplore the loss of human lives and extend our deepest sympathy to the families affected.

In the statement made by the delegation of Equatorial Guinea on the Palestinian question (see S/PV.8214), we invited the parties to refrain from committing acts that could lead to violence. We reiterate that same request today. There must be an immediate and permanent end to the violence, and each party must comply with international law, pursuant to the relevant United Nations resolutions. In that regard, we condemn the attempt to assassinate the Palestinian Prime Minister.

The solution to the Palestinian question will be found only through dialogue and politics. It is for that reason that we call on the parties to resolve their differences at the negotiating table regardless of how difficult it might be. It is likely that both parties will have to make concessions and that not all of their aspirations and demands will be met — that is dialogue. Negotiations must take place within the framework of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. The two-State solution, according to which Palestinians and Israelis shall live in peace and security, is the only fair solution. Intra-Palestinian dialogue must continue. Palestinians must be able to resolve their differences. We would ask the international community to pursue its efforts to foster dialogue among the parties and to refrain from actions that could be counterproductive to peaceful coexistence among Palestinians and Israelis.

The situation has become very worrisome, given that the number of people who died as a result of the demonstrations has exceeded the number of victims since the end of the war in Gaza in 2014. Since then, there has been a period of relative calm. In that regard, we support the idea put forward by Kuwait for the Security Council to issue a communiqué calling on Israelis and Palestinians to put an immediate end to the violence that could escalate and cause the already critical and delicate situation to deteriorate.

Mr. Michon (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank Kuwait for requesting the holding of today's emergency meeting and the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs for his briefing. Given his worrisome description of the situation, I would like to make three comments.

First, we are very concerned about today's developments, which have exacerbated an already tense situation in the Gaza Strip. The response of the Israeli security forces to last-minute protests has left a number of dead and hundreds with bullet wounds. The threshold for violence has been crossed. As we wait for light to be shed on the incident, I should like to remind the Council about two very important issues: first, respect for international humanitarian law, in particular the importance of protecting civilians, and, secondly, respect for the right of Palestinians to hold peaceful demonstrations. Measures taken by Israel to protect itself — a concern we all share — must take those issues into account. We call on Israel to demonstrate discretion, restraint and proportional use of force. We urge protesters to refrain from violence.

There is a very real risk of an escalation of violence, which we mentioned at Wednesday's open debate (see S/PV.8218). Another conflict could erupt in Gaza. There are calls for frequent protests to be held until 15 May. Conditions are therefore conducive to an upsurge in violence. There is a humanitarian crisis in Gaza, which will only deteriorate due to the financial difficulties of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The intra-Palestinian reconciliation process has been at a standstill since the assassination attempt against the Palestinian Prime Minister on 13 February, which we firmly condemn. At the same time, the security situation has deteriorated with the use of improvised explosive devices, which have targeted Israeli soldiers along the Israel-Gaza security barrier in recent weeks, and offensive tunnels to prepare for attacks launched from the Gaza Strip. We condemn all such actions.

All indicators are still red, and, in the absence of a political perspective that offers hope to the populations, the situation is very worrying. In that context, it is important that we support the return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza so that it can fully exercise its prerogatives in the Gaza Strip, including in the area of security. That process must also be accompanied by a lifting of the blockade, along with credible security guarantees for Israel.

Finally, we must not dissociate the situation in Gaza from the Palestinian question as a whole. Palestinian unity is an essential element of a just and lasting peace based on the perspective of the two States. It is essential that we call for an early resumption of serious negotiations with a view to implementing the two-State solution.

In conclusion, we believe it is essential for the Council to remain actively seized of the matter and, as requested by Kuwait, to express its support for protecting civilians and avoiding any disproportionate response.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): My delegation is grateful to the Kuwaiti delegation for calling for today's meeting on the situation unfolding in Gaza. We also express our appreciation to Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun for his comprehensive and objective update.

We are very concerned about the increasing death toll caused by the escalation of violence on the border of the Gaza Strip and Israel. My delegation wishes to convey its condolences to the Palestinian people for the tragic death of civilians during what was supposed to be a peaceful demonstration. We consider this occurrence to be an irreparable and senseless loss of life.

Kazakhstan also fully supports the right of the Palestinian people to self-expression and peaceful demonstrations. It is very important that Israeli soldiers correctly calibrate the volume of force used against peaceful demonstrators. We join the position of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which we, along with Kuwait and Côte d'Ivoire, represent in the Security Council, with condemnation of the use of weapons against them. We believe this turn of events could be a dangerous development in the situation in the Middle East region as a whole. In that regard, Kazakhstan calls on both sides to the conflict to exercise restraint. We also consider it necessary to conduct a thorough investigation into the incident, identify the perpetrators and hold them accountable for what happened.

Kazakhstan considers it important to continue efforts aimed at consolidating Palestinian ranks in the Palestine Liberation Organization political platform as a necessary condition for the practical realization of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to create their own independent State. We note that the parties must find a solution for the difficult humanitarian situation in Gaza.

The current situation requires coming up with confidence-building measures for an entire region, including in the economic field, with strong support from the international community. In that regard, Kazakhstan endorses the concern expressed earlier by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process on the funding of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East this year (see S/PV.8214). A significant reduction of its regular budget has already increased the anxieties of 5.3 million Palestinian refugees who have already suffered an extremely protracted refugee crisis. Kazakhstan also expresses great concern over the expansion of settlements, which are illegal under international law and in the view of the Middle East Quartet, and which are further escalating the tense situation around the status of Jerusalem, resulting in protests among populations.

Lastly, we call upon the leaders of Israel and Palestine to take concrete steps to preserve the possibility of peaceful coexistence and the two-State solution and strengthen the prospects for peace. As we always say in the Security Council, this effort should be based on the inalienable rights of Palestinians to statehood and of Israel to security. But we would now also like to underline Palestine's inalienable right to security. It is necessary to begin negotiations in the very near future on each outstanding problem, aimed at reaching agreement on pending issues and giving them a so-called final status. Only innovative policy, with a security-development nexus, a revamped regional approach and a more transparent, efficient and accountable United Nations delivering as one on the ground, will help the parties to escape the kind of tragedy that has occurred today.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the information provided by Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun. We are also grateful to the Permanent Mission of Kuwait for requesting this important meeting, and to the presidency for convening it in such a timely manner.

Today we woke up to the alarming news that, as a result of violent repression by Israeli security forces, 15 people had been killed and more than 1,200 wounded. All of them were innocent civilians participating in the Great March of Return. The Plurinational State of Bolivia strongly condemns Israel's disproportionate violent military action against the Palestinian population and calls on the Government of Israel to refrain from the use of violence and respect international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians.

The exacerbation in, and trends of, violence in Gaza are the result of 70 years of unresolved and persistent conflict, including 50 years of illegal occupation of Palestinian territories by the occupying Power, Israel,

and the inhumane blockade of the Gaza Strip, which has led to a catastrophic humanitarian situation. As long as this situation persists, a just and lasting peace for both peoples will be less and less likely.

During the past 50 years, Israeli policies of dispossession and occupation have filled the Palestinian people with suffering. In January 2018 alone, the Israeli authorities demolished or seized 32 Palestinian-owned structures in the West Bank, and last week we were informed of the Israeli Government's decision to build 1,500 new settlements in Area C. We call on the Government of Israel to cease the expropriation of Palestinian land and halt the expansion of the settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, in accordance with resolution 2334 (2016).

We are also convinced that the announcement by some States to change the location of their embassies to the city of Jerusalem will only increase tensions in the region and lead to an escalation of violence of great proportions. As a pacifist country, Bolivia sees the path of dialogue and negotiation with clear expressions of political will from both sides for achieving a two-State solution to be the only alternative that can guarantee a just and lasting peace in the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

We therefore reaffirm our full commitment to multilateralism and international law and reiterate our support for all international efforts leading to a peaceful solution, such as the Quartet road map, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative, inter alia, which will guarantee a just and lasting peace and allow both peoples to live within recognized and secure borders. We also reiterate that the only long-term solution is the two-State solution, which finally consolidates a free, sovereign and independent Palestinian State within the pre-1967 internationally recognized borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

Mr. Woldegerima (Ethiopia): I will be very brief. We thank you, Mr. President, for responding to the request for the convening of today's meeting. We express our gratitude to Assistant Secretary-General and Acting Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Tayé-Brook Zerihoun for his briefing on the latest in the situation on the ground. What happened in Gaza is undoubtedly tragic. We would like to raise two or three matters at this time.

The first and most important issue is the fact that, unless there is a return to the peace process and real progress is made towards resolving the underlying crisis, this kind of tragedy is bound to happen again and again. We discussed this point earlier this week, and we agree with what Acting Under-Secretary-General Zerihoun said with regard to finding a sustainable and lasting solution. In fact, the possibility of a further deterioration of the situation cannot be ruled out, as some have already said, and that has always concerned us.

Secondly, we express our sorrow over the loss of life and the wounding of many. Undoubtedly, it is a sad day.

Thirdly, we believe that what is most important now is for all parties to exercise self-restraint and for the Security Council to follow the matter very closely.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the holding of this emergency meeting and for the briefing by Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun.

Peru is following with deep concern the situation in Gaza. We deplore and mourn the death of at least 15 Palestinians, and we note that hundreds of others have been injured. We point out that the violence continues to increase in the form of both parties' violent rhetoric, and, effectively, Hamas might be interested in provoking an escalation. Nonetheless, we note that the unsustainable status quo puts off the need to address the root causes of the conflict, and that the humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate.

We recognize the right of Palestinians to demonstrate peacefully based on their freedom of speech and assembly. We also condemn any attack or attempt to carry out a terrorist attack, and we acknowledge the right of Israel to legitimately defend itself in accordance with the principles of proportionality, caution and legality. In that regard, we condemn the disproportionate use of force under international law and international humanitarian law. Moreover, we note that the situation was not unforeseeable. Several days ago when we meet with Mr. Mladenov (see S/PV.8214), we expressed our concern about the risk of an escalation and underscored the need to protect civilians. Accordingly, we reiterate the need for the United Nations and those countries with influence in the region to take urgent measures so as to prevent further violence and protect civilians.

Lastly, we call all parties to act with restraint, avoid further escalation and facilitate an environment of reduced tensions that will enable achieving the two-State solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Mr. Lie Cheng (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Acting Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his emergency-meeting briefing. We thank Kuwait for proposing the holding of this meeting, and the presidency of the Netherlands for quickly organizing it.

We note that the situation in Gaza is very tense, and we are following it very closely. We are concerned about the fact that many people have been killed or injured. We call for implementing all the relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2334 (2016), halting all settlement activities in the occupied territories and taking all measures to prevent violence against civilians. All parties should remain calm and exercise restraint, meet one another halfway and create the necessary environment for resuming talks. Parties with major influence on countries in the Middle East should also play a constructive role in that regard.

The question of Palestine is the foundational issue underlying achieving peace in the Middle East. We call for the unity of the Security Council and the international community and for continued efforts to advance the political settlement of the question of Palestine. The two-State solution is the correct way to resolve the issue. We must adhere to the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative, based upon which we must step up efforts to push for the resumption of talks.

China firmly supports and promotes the peace process in the Middle East and supports the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State by the Palestinian people based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. China will continue to actively promote President Xi Jinping's four-point proposal for settling the Palestinian question and will continue to play a constructive role in the Middle East peace process.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): Let me first thank Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Acting Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

Along with the delegations of the United States and the United Kingdom, I would like also to note the fact that the representative of Israel unfortunately could not participate in this meeting because of the Passover holiday.

We are following the latest developments in the Gaza Strip with great concern. Unfortunately, recent events have only confirmed how tense the security situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory is. We strongly condemn the current escalation of violence. We also emphasize that any use of force should be proportional. We call for respect of international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians.

Poland condemns all acts of terrorism and incitement to violence. They constitute a significant obstacle to the de-escalation of tensions. We called on both parties to condemn all acts of terror. At the same time, we encourage the parties to the conflict to take actions aimed at de-escalating tensions and calming the situation on the ground.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Let me start with expressing our regret that the representative of Israel cannot participate in this debate because of Passover — an important religious holiday in Israel.

I will address three points: first, the increasing tensions around Gaza; secondly, the short-term steps needed to stop the crisis; and, thirdly, the need for long-term stability.

Concerning my first point, we are deeply alarmed by the rising tensions around Gaza. Reports of 15 deaths and hundreds of injured are highly disturbing and regrettable.

With regard to my second point, concerning short-term steps to stop the crisis, we call on all sides to exercise restraint and prevent further escalation and loss of lives. We call on the de facto authorities in Gaza to maintain the peaceful character of the protests and prevent them from becoming violent. We call on Israel to ensure that its responses at all times are proportionate and necessary. The use of live ammunition as a crowd-control effort should be used only as a measure of last resort. We call on Israel to thoroughly investigate all incidents in which the use of crowd-control measures has led to casualties. The incidents of the past week

whereby armed individuals from Gaza have entered Israel show that Israel's security concerns are real. We condemn those attacks and repeat that there is no excuse for terrorism. We call on all parties to refrain from any action that would worsen the situation by way of incitement or provocation. We also call on all parties to respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians.

With regard to my third point, concerning long-term stability, the situation in Gaza has been a matter of concern for a long time. In recent months, the Council has debated the situation in Gaza several times. We recall that, in order to achieve a sustainable solution, a comprehensive approach is required. A political process, humanitarian aid, economic development and infrastructure development go hand in hand. We need the Palestinian Authority as the legitimate Government to return to Gaza. We call on the Palestinian Authority and all other Palestinian parties to continue their efforts to overcome their differences and to genuinely proceed with reconciliation.

All those measures, together with the two-State solution as a political horizon, are needed to ensure that we will not be having the same debate once again next month, next year or in five years.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): Allow me at the outset to thank Kuwait for requesting this emergency meeting, and you, Sir, for accommodating that request in a very speedy manner.

I also want to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs for his briefing at the beginning of this meeting.

Before I deliver my statement, I would like to say a few words in Arabic, mainly addressed to our people in the occupied Palestinian territories.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

At the outset, I wish to commend our steadfast and valiant people all across the occupied territory of the State of Palestine, including our people in the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank, as well as our people living inside the Green Line and in the diaspora, as they commemorate Land Day and the March of Return. We bow respectfully to our heroic martyrs and wounded, and we stress their leading role always.

We condemn in the strongest terms today's heinous massacre and we call for an end to it. We demand that those who are responsible be brought to justice and call for international protection for civilians in the occupied territory. The Security Council must uphold its responsibility and take a stance in condemning the massacre in order to put an end to it and protect our civilians. If that effort is blocked and the Council is unable to assume its responsibilities, those responsible must also bear the responsibility for covering up and protecting the Israeli criminals instead of stopping them.

(*spoke in English*)

We come before the Security Council today with a sense of repugnance and urgency in light of Israel's latest campaign of military aggression and attacks against the defenceless Palestinian civilian population, in grave breach of international law, including international humanitarian law and the relevant provisions regarding the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Today, at least 17 Palestinian civilians have been killed and more than 1,400 injured — many of them seriously — in the besieged Gaza Strip. Tomorrow has been declared by our Government as a national day of mourning in Palestine. The majority of those killed were taking part in a peaceful, non-violent demonstration — a peaceful, non-violent demonstration — to mark the forty-second anniversary of Land Day, commemorating events in which six Palestinians were killed in protest against Israel's illegal expropriation of thousands of dunums of Palestinian land in 1976, and to reiterate the right of return for Palestine refugees. In this regard, I recall that 70 per cent of Gaza's 2 million Palestinians are registered refugees whose right of return has been systematically been denied by Israel.

The names of some of the Palestinians tragically killed are Mohammed Najjar, age 25; Mahmoud Muammar, age 38; Mohammed Abu Omar, age 22; Ahmed Oudeh, age 19; Jihad Freneh, age 33; Mahmoud Saadi Rahmi, age 33; Abdelfattah Abdelnabi, age 22; and Ibrahim Abu Shaar, age 20; as well as Iyad Abdelal, Abdelqader Al-Hawajiri, Sari Abu Odeh, Hamdan Abu Amsheh, Jihad Abu Jamous, Bader Al-Sabbagh and Naji Abu Hjai, whose ages remain unknown. Moreover, earlier on Friday Omar Waheed Abu Samour, a farmer

from the Gaza Strip, was also killed by Israeli artillery fire while standing on his land near Khan Younis, just hours ahead of the peaceful and non-violent demonstrations.

There is nothing more repulsive than a massacre of unarmed, defenceless people, including women and children. Yet this is exactly what Israel, the occupying Power, has done and continues to do year after year ever since its inception. Those peaceful demonstrators posed no threat whatsoever to Israel or to its heavily armed soldiers. I repeat — those peaceful demonstrators posed no threat whatsoever to Israel or to its heavily armed soldiers. Yet, Israel's trigger-happy soldiers used live ammunition, tear gas and rubber bullets to shoot indiscriminately at those non-violent protestors, who were demonstrating inside the Gaza Strip near the site of the well-fortified barrier that separates them from Israel.

How can that be condoned? People who were demonstrating peacefully, as was their right to do under all elements of international law, including international human rights law, cannot be equated in any way with the belligerence, attacks and massacre committed by the Israeli armed forces. To those who would call for a balanced perspective, I say that there is no balance in this case. It was a case of armed forces unleashing massive power against unarmed civilian protestors demonstrating peacefully, leading to the massacre and the large number of casualties.

Today's protests were meant to kick off six weeks of peaceful protests leading up to the commemoration of Al-Nakba on 15 May. This year's commemoration of Al-Nakba will solemnly observe the passage of 70 years since more than 800,000 Palestinians — 70 per cent of our people at that time — were forcibly uprooted and expelled from their homes and lands or fled in fear for their lives after brutal massacres were carried out in over 400 Palestinian towns and villages by Zionist terrorist groups in Mandate Palestine, in a clear act of ethnic cleansing.

As is usual practice for Israel, today's vicious attacks by Israel against disarmed and unprotected Palestinian civilians were premeditated and deliberate. Israeli officials have been preparing the ground for these attacks with inciting, provocative and violent rhetoric. Such incitement even led to statements being made by human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, which issued a warning yesterday calling on the Israeli occupying forces to "refrain from using excessive force" following reports that it had deployed more than 100 snipers — as despicted in the Israeli media — with orders "to shoot anyone who breaches the wall between Israel and Gaza". In addition to the snipers, the occupying forces also sent armoured vehicles, sniffer and attack dogs, as well as hundreds of other occupying forces equipped with all sorts of lethal ammunition to use as they pleased and without regard to Palestinian lives in the Gaza Strip. We should not forget that the 2 million Palestinian civilians in Gaza already suffer immeasurably from Israel's 10-year blockade, which has led to a dire socioeconomic and humanitarian crisis.

It is more than clear, in words and deeds, that the latest the incitements of Israeli officials and the barbaric violence of its occupying forces against the rights and lives of the Palestinian people have little to do with Israel's so-called security and everything to do with maintaining its strangulating control over the lives of every Palestinian man, women and child living under its brutal occupation. It should be stated that the occupying Power's ongoing violent silencing of all Palestinian non-violent actions against its systematic dehumanization of the Palestinian people and the denial of their inalienable rights will never succeed. The people will continue to fight for their rights, including their rights to be free from occupation and to live in peace and security and with dignity.

Tragically, as we witness the events of today, in which tens of thousands of Palestinians are peacefully marching throughout the occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, as well as among the Palestinian population living in Israel and in the diaspora, these events remind us that Al-Nakba did not end in 1948 and continues to this day. In this connection, it is beyond tragic that millions of Palestinians continue to live either in exile as refugees, denied the inalienable right to return to their homes, or under Israel's half-century belligerent military occupation of the State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, where they are forced to endure the constant violation of their fundamental human rights, including Israel's ongoing theft of Palestinian land for illegal settlements, its destruction of Palestinian homes and agricultural land, the revocation of residency rights, deportations, recurring brutal military assaults that have resulted in mass civilian casualties — such as those that took place in Gaza in 2008-2009, 2012 and 2014 — and the denial

of the internationally recognized legal right of return of millions of stateless Palestinian refugees.

We call on the Council to act swiftly to uphold its Charter duties and the integrity and authority of its resolutions in light of the violations of and provocations against the rights and legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people. The international community must condemn unequivocally and in the strongest terms Israel's criminal and illegal actions in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially in the Gaza Strip. Israel must be held fully accountable for all of its crimes, including the most recent killings today of innocent Palestinian civilians, in accordance with international law and the principles of justice.

We welcome the requests made by many Council members for investigations of the Israeli occupation forces with respect to the massacre that has taken place today in the Gaza Strip. With the high number of deaths today, we call once more on the international community, particularly the Security Council, to act now to provide protection to the Palestinian people in order to avert more bloodshed and to save innocent Palestinian lives, and to defuse this volatile situation, which clearly constitutes a threat to international peace and security. The international community must uphold its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and to bring an immediate end to the occupying Power's military aggression.

As we have stated in the past, the Palestinian people cannot remain the exception to international commitments to and obligations under international law, including the obligation to protect civilians from atrocities and grave breaches, especially under foreign military occupation.

The President: As this may be the last meeting of the Council for the month of March, let me express the sincere appreciation and thanks of the delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the members of the Council, especially my colleagues the Permanent Representatives and their respective staff, and to the secretariat of the Council for all the support they have given to us.

It has been a busy month, and one in which we rallied to consensus on several important issues within our purview. We could not have done it alone or without the hard work, support and positive contributions of every delegation and the representatives of the Secretariat, as well as all the relevant conference service officers, interpreters and security staff.

As we end our presidency, I know I speak on behalf of the Council in wishing the delegation of Peru good luck in the coming month. Peru may rest assured that we will do our utmost in supporting it in fulfilling its grave responsibilities in the presidency of the Security Council in April.

The meeting rose at 8.50 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8220

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8220th meeting
Tuesday, 3 April 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Meza-Cuadra	(Peru)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

The question concerning Haiti

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (S/2018/241)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Security Council, to pay tribute to His Excellency Ambassador Karel Van Oosterom, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands, for his service as President of the Council for the month of March. I am sure I speak for all members of the Security Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Van Oosterom and his delegation for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The question concerning Haiti

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (S/2018/241)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia and Haiti to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. João Pedro Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/241, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix (*spoke in French*): I should at the outset like to express my gratitude to you, Sir, and the Peruvian presidency for having convened today's meeting on Haiti.

I also take this opportunity to welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Haiti.

This is the first time that I have the honour of addressing the Council on Haiti and our first opportunity to discuss the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) since the launch of its operations on 16 October 2017, as called for in resolution 2350 (2017).

I visited Haiti on 14 and 15 March, and I am pleased to inform the Council that the Mission is fully operational and actively implementing its mandate. Its civilian presence is concentrated in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince, with multidisciplinary mobile teams that monitor political and rule of law developments and engage with local communities and stakeholders on a regular basis across Haiti's 10 departments. This model of deployment is linked to the Mission's light and non-intrusive footprint, while creating a channel of regular communication with the Haitian population throughout the country.

(*spoke in English*)

At the same time, in order to maintain a close relationship with the Haitian institutions it supports, the Mission has co-located 135 individual police officers with the Haitian National Police (HNP) in Haiti's 10 departments, and 23 Government-provided corrections personnel in 9 of Haiti's 18 prisons. The presence of seven formed police units (FPUs) in 5 of the 10 regions ensures the provision of operational support to the HNP and a security presence across the country. The Mission works closely with the 19 United Nations agencies, funds and programmes engaged in Haiti, as well as with the Office of the Special Envoy for Haiti, Ms. Josette Sheeran, to fulfil its mandate and enable a seamless transition towards inclusive, sustainable development through a coherent, comprehensive and integrated approach, in line with the ongoing United Nations reforms and the Secretary-General's vision on prevention.

MINUJUSTH's main objective is to build on the achievements of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti and is tied to the overarching goal of the United Nations in consolidating stability and security in the country to facilitate Haiti's path to longer-term

development, of which a stronger rule of law and the enjoyment of human rights remain critical foundations. As the Council acknowledged when mandating MINUJUSTH, the political and good offices role of the Mission remain the cornerstone of our strategy to achieve these objectives.

In the past months, MINUJUSTH, in partnership with the United Nations country team, has implemented targeted activities in support of its objectives, preparing the ground for more systemic change. Operating within an overall stable environment, notwithstanding the withdrawal of United Nations military troops last year, the Mission has been fully engaged in assisting the HNP in implementing its 2017-2021 strategic development plan, notably through its mentoring and advisory programme for the HNP senior management. Likewise, it has started supporting the two regulatory bodies of the judiciary, the Superior Council of the Judiciary and the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, in strengthening accountability and oversight capacity through assistance to their respective inspection units, as well as to their joint technical vetting commissions.

Other key areas of support of the Mission are dedicated to helping curb prolonged pretrial detention and prison overcrowding, notably through on-site monitoring of activities at the justice of the peace tribunal of Port-au-Prince to ensure caseload management procedures are applied and through provision of assistance to the penal chain committee of that court. Closely related to this assistance is the Mission's work with the Bar Association of Port-au-Prince, funded through community violence-reduction projects, to put in place two legal aid offices dedicated to providing counsel to over 50 per cent of detainees in pretrial detention at the national penitentiary, as well as to newly detained defendants. Discussions are currently ongoing to establish legal aid offices dedicated to women and minors in detention.

The Mission's human rights monitoring and reporting provides early warning and structural analysis to adjust and tailor its advocacy and specialized support. Nevertheless, the weaknesses of the rule of law institutions continue to generate multiple human rights challenges and encourage a culture of impunity. Therefore, priorities in this domain include the need to strengthen national human rights institutions — particularly the Office of the National Human Rights Ombudsperson and the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights, as well as national human rights civil-society organizations, to ensure due process and access to justice, enhance the protection of women and children, and the fight against sexual and gender-based violence.

As a peacekeeping operation, MINUJUSTH can be effective only if it has a sound relationship with the Government and the people of Haiti based on solidarity and mutual trust. A frank, open and respectful dialogue with key national stakeholders is necessary to allow for positive collaboration at all levels in order to bring about effective change. I am strongly encouraged by the willingness and the continuing efforts demonstrated by President Moïse and his Government to create a climate for change, which I witnessed during my recent visit to Haiti. I reiterate the support I expressed to the President for his determination to improve the daily lives of all Haitians, in particular through his Caravane du changement programme.

While acknowledging that there could have been a misunderstanding between MINUJUSTH and the Government of Haiti, I am also encouraged by recent indications of a closer, substantive convergence of national and MINUJUSTH priorities. In this regard, I welcome the most recent announcement of President Moïse's priorities on State reform and the maintenance of political and social stability, which include the strengthening of the justice system and the Haitian National Police, the fight against impunity and prolonged pretrial detention, combating and preventing corruption, the establishment of the Permanent Electoral Council, and the launching of a national dialogue, the so-called États généraux sectoriels.

The 11 benchmarks presented in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/241) echo this vision and include the areas of focus that MINUJUSTH supports for closer, more fruitful and strategic collaboration with national institutions and civil society. It is therefore a unique opportunity for the Haitian Government, MINUJUSTH, the United Nations country team and the international community to jointly implement common priorities indicated by resolution 2350 (2017) and Haiti's Vision 2030, in line with the Agenda for Sustainable Development. Building on the Secretary-General messages of solidarity and partnership with Haiti, which I also conveyed to my Haitian interlocutors in March, I would like to reiterate the readiness of the United Nations to support the Government in devising a clear road map for the achievement of its State

reform agenda, taking into account the capacities of MINUJUSTH on the ground.

Alongside these opportunities, we need to keep in mind that challenges and risks remain, especially as we prepare for a transition from peacekeeping to development. Haiti has come a long way to achieve the relative political and security stability it is now enjoying, but persistent economic uncertainties, which can result in social exclusion, particularly of youth and the most vulnerable, may undermine this progress. The work of the legislature has recently slowed down, characterized by disagreements over procedural issues, thereby affecting the pace of adoption of key legislation. The anticipated holding of elections in the last quarter of 2019 to possibly renew the legislature could lead to a more polarized political landscape, creating an environment less conducive to addressing systemic challenges to the rule of law.

While achieving results should remain our common priority, we have already started to prepare for a transition to a non-peacekeeping presence, based on lessons learned in Haiti and in other contexts. Under the guidance of the Secretary-General's Executive Committee, the full United Nations system on the ground and at Headquarters is engaged in a transition strategy that will build on existing, United Nations-wide instruments, such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, as a tool for transition, including on rule-of-law issues. The strategy will also seek to anticipate and mitigate any gaps that may arise from the withdrawal of the peacekeeping operation within the time frame stipulated by the Security Council. We look forward to a close collaboration with the Haitian Government and other partners to ensure the success of this transition, as we do for the implementation of MINUJUSTH's mandate.

The benchmarks for an exit strategy presented to the Council weave together an ambitious but flexible framework based on the criteria under which the current United Nations configuration can confidently be transformed into a non-peacekeeping presence in the country. In the coming months, we will provide the Security Council with qualitative and quantitative assessments of progress and trends in these areas, in close collaboration with Haitian institutions, in order to allow members of the Council to take well-informed decisions for the drawdown and eventual withdrawal of MINUJUSTH. A broadly consulted and owned, benchmarks-based exit, remains the right approach to preserving the stabilization and peacebuilding gains achieved over a decade in Haiti. We are determined to ensure, within the overall time frame already indicated by the Council in its resolution 2350 (2017), that MINUJUSTH be the last peacekeeping operation deployed in Haiti.

The unanimous vote by the Security Council nearly one year ago, on 13 April 2017, which established MINUJUSTH (see S/PV.7924), was a vote of confidence in Haiti, in recognition of the progress the country has made. We have many reasons to be optimistic that this path to progress is irreversible, while we — Haiti, the United Nations and international and regional partners — need to jointly continue investing in the success of the country and United Nations engagement in it. As was mentioned by the Secretary-General last week in his statement on his Action for Peacekeeping initiative (see S/PV.8218), the exercise of the Council's responsibility to support peacekeeping missions is a critical component in this case as well, namely, for the success of MINUJUSTH and the future of Haiti.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Ms. Tachco (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing today.

Last October, the transition from the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to the more focused, police-only United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) marked a turning point for the country. The Haitians themselves are truly taking the lead in providing their own security and law enforcement. The transition from MINUSTAH to MINUJUSTH set a strong example of how United Nations peacekeeping operations can and should change as the political and security situation on the ground evolves. When peacekeeping works well, we see countries develop their own capacities to protect their citizens and we see countries re-establish domestic political processes. We believe that MINUJUSTH has the potential to do just that and will continue to foster the independence and self-sufficiency of the Haitian people.

We commend the important and necessary steps that the Government has already taken to achieve long-term security and stability in Haiti. We are encouraged

by how far Haiti has come in growing the capacity of the Haitian National Police (HNP) — an institution that we will continue to prioritize and support as it takes the lead in ensuring the country's security. We believe that MINUJUSTH's various components, including formed police units, individual police officers and corrections officers, as well as civilian experts in the rule of law, human rights, political affairs, gender, conduct and discipline and other key areas, contribute significantly to the rule of law and justice sector priorities that the international community and the Government of Haiti have identified. The United Nations mentoring and advising of the HNP has been and will continue to be a key factor in the HNP's ability to ensure public order and provide security for the Haitian people.

Looking to the future, Haiti's security, political and development agenda can be shaped only by Haitians themselves. The Government of Haiti must focus on strengthening its judicial system and human rights institutions to help consolidate the long-term stability and stabilization gains of the past few years. We hope to see significant progress in many areas, including addressing prolonged pretrial detention and prison overcrowding, eliminating sexual and gender-based violence and achieving the full participation of women in decision-making. It is critical that Haiti take the opportunity to advance dialogue on the additional measures required to strengthen its institutions, such as adopting the draft penal and criminal procedural codes and establishing the permanent electoral council, so that those bodies can be around to serve the Haitian people long after MINUJUSTH departs.

At the end of the day, Haiti bears the primary responsibility for making that happen, and it can count on support from the United Nations, of course from the United States and from many others in the international community. We welcome MINUJUSTH's benchmarked exit strategy and look forward to updates on timelines for the transition of tasks and responsibilities to the Haitian Government, in coordination with the United Nations country team.

That said, crucial work remains in the time that MINUJUSTH has left to execute its important tasks. We stress the critical importance of filling the remainder of the Mission's staffing and vacant United Nations police positions as soon as possible. The United States is a long-standing friend and partner of Haiti. We remain committed to working with the Haitian Government to ensure the country's long-term security, democratic development and economic growth. We look forward to this new chapter of growth and independence in the unfolding story of the Haitian people.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we thank the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, for his insightful briefing on the latest developments in the Republic of Haiti with respect to the activities of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH).

Bolivia reaffirms its commitment to the present and future of the Republic of Haiti. The international community must continue to work in unity, supporting Haiti's economic and social development in order to enable it to face the remaining challenges, particularly in the security sector and the rule of law. We believe that such support should be provided in consultation and close coordination with the Government of Haiti.

Similarly, we believe that the new mandate of MINUJUSTH will be decisive, since, in the light of the latest visit of the Security Council to the country, the long-term needs to be met on the ground have been identified. We must take into account the fact that there is a two-year term to execute a series of essential tasks and objectives in accordance with the 11 benchmarks established for the Mission's exit strategy. In that regard, and in accordance with the latest report of the Secretary-General, we encourage MINUJUSTH and its partners to strengthen their link with the Government of Haiti, in order to

> "ensure a closer convergence of views and priorities and to establish a joint programme of work that will provide a road map for collaboration and joint action" (*S/2018/241, para. 54*).

Progress on those benchmarks and their results must be worked on pursuant to the mandate of MINUJUSTH in the areas of the rule of law, security and human rights, in accordance with resolution 2350 (2017).

We also highlight Haiti's progress in implementing its reform agenda so as to, inter alia, promote sustainable development and fight corruption through its six political priorities, which include the strengthening and modernization of the justice sector, the adoption of a legislative agenda focused on stimulating investment and the improvement of social services, among others.

Furthermore, we welcome the appointment of the Ombudsperson's replacement and the future appointment

of a focal point within the executive branch to facilitate the implementation of the commitments undertaken through international human rights mechanisms in order to continue strengthening Haitian institutions. We believe that it is essential to ensure the rule of law and to lay the foundation for greater political and social cohesion, as well as to address current socioeconomic and development challenges.

Likewise, we commend the Republic of Haiti for assuming the presidency of the Caribbean Community, in addition to the initiative taken by the Heads of State and Government of that organization to create an intraregional workforce to combat the increase in crime and violence in the region. We note the decrease of both in Haiti and encourage them to continue along that path. In that regard, we commend the efforts of MINUJUSTH to improve the infrastructure and training of the Haitian National Police through its mentoring and advising programme, which seeks to transfer essential skills to middle and senior management, as well as its training programme, which will contribute to the implementation of the 2017-2021 strategic development plan for that institution. We also appreciate and support the work carried out by the Mission in the area of the rule of law and encourage it to pursue its work in coordination with the Government of Haiti.

We appreciate the progress made in the fight against cholera through the Secretary-General's new approach. The United Nations and its members have a collective responsibility to ensure its full implementation. With that in mind, we call on the international community to work to meet its commitments and cooperate with the Republic of Haiti to build solid sanitation and health systems. Cholera remains a central problem that affects not only sanitation and access to water, but all areas of development and stability in Haiti. Fighting that scourge is a priority, as highlighted during the Security Council's visit in 2017.

With regard to sexual abuse and exploitation, we take note of the commitment of MINUJUSTH to prevention activities, including training, facilitation of information and counselling. We encourage the Mission to pursue its efforts with respect to the principle of zero tolerance for those responsible for sexual exploitation and abuse, who, if found guilty, should be punished accordingly. We reiterate our concern about the issue of children who are left fatherless as a result of sexual abuse.

Finally, Bolivia recognizes the national ownership and primary responsibility of the Government and people of Haiti for all aspects of their country's development, and encourages MINUJUSTH to fulfil its mandate with respect to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Haiti.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your kind words for our presidency, which I will convey with great pleasure to Ambassador Van Oosterom and the entire team. Allow me in turn to congratulate you, sir, on assuming the presidency for the month of April. I wish you every success.

My thanks also go to Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his briefing.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands aligns itself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands is following the developments in Haiti with the greatest interest, as three of our four constituent countries — Aruba, Curaçao and Saint Martin — are located in the Caribbean. Today, I would like to address the following three points: the current situation, the role of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) and the prospects for the future.

With regard to the current situation, in recent years Haiti has embarked on an impressive journey towards change. The country has made major progress in stabilizing the political situation and security conditions. With the support of the United Nations, including through the global focal point for police, justice and corrections, the Haitian National Police has been professionalized and has recruited a considerable number of women. The terrible epidemic of cholera that ravaged the country for more than eight years finally seems to be under control.

However, there are still challenges to overcome. There are worrying reports about the length of pretrial detention, the overcrowding of prisons and insufficient access to justice. That can be resolved only by adopting the relevant legislation and by enhancing the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of the security and rule of law institutions. The unacceptable cases of human rights violations by the Haitian National Police underscore the need to put in place strengthened

oversight and accountability mechanisms in the public sector.

That brings me to my second point — the role of the Mission. Haiti cannot meet such challenges alone. MINUJUSTH was established to support the Government and the people of Haiti in their efforts to build a better future. However, only through close cooperation will the Mission and the Haitian State succeed in building and strengthening the country's public institutions. Priorities and efforts must be matched. Through its good offices and its advocacy role, the Mission is fundamental to ensuring political ownership of the shared goals. In order to achieve the ambitious goals of the Mission, it is necessary to accelerate progress and to strengthen cooperation.

In that regard, it is essential to develop as soon as possible, in close cooperation with the United Nations country team, a comprehensive joint strategy to lay the groundwork for the completion of the peacekeeping phase. In that way, the progress made in fulfilling the Mission's mandate can be measured so as to ensure a responsible withdrawal that meets the conditions identified.

That brings me to my third point — the prospects for the future. In the end, we have the same objective: to make Haiti a prosperous and safe society. Strengthening the rule of law is rightly the cornerstone of that objective. The rule of law is the bedrock of any just, prosperous and peaceful society, which is an element of trust for both the population and the investors. We encourage Haiti to seize this opportunity and to take full advantage of its partnership with the Mission. Such a partnership must be based on the credibility, legitimacy and integrity of the United Nations presence in Haiti. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse. We underscore the importance of the previous mission, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, being held accountable for past acts.

We look forward to the Secretary-General's report on the new strategy to fight cholera. We emphasize the need for the effective implementation of the strategy. We must turn the page on cholera.

I would like to conclude by expressing the wish that 18 months from now, the parliamentary elections will mark the beginning of a new era in Haiti. In the meantime, let us use this time to build a strong and sustainable foundation for political stability, security and inclusive development by promoting the meaningful participation, involvement and representation of women at all levels and to allow the people of Haiti, with the steadfast support of the United Nations and the international community, to take back the reins of their future.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): In taking the floor on behalf of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea at this meeting on the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), allow me to address through you, Mr. President, our most sincere congratulations to Peru on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. In wishing you resounding success, I affirm the unfailing support of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea in the execution of your work.

We also congratulate the Kingdom of the Netherlands on its excellent stewardship of the Council during the month of March. Its presidency was characterized by exceptional drive and welcome results.

We have followed with great attention the presentation by Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, who, as usual, provided us with a clear, detailed and complete briefing on MINUJUSTH, which not only highlighted the political and economic aspects of the country but also described the current humanitarian and security situation in that brotherly country.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea follows closely and regrets the various setbacks that the friendly and brotherly people of Haiti have suffered, from the blows of repeated natural disasters to the political challenges have undermined the efforts of both the Haitian Government and people and the development partners for the country to set out on the path towards sustainable development. We express our appreciation, recognition and congratulations for the various appropriate actions taken by the United Nations in Haiti, including establishing the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti in June 2004, replacing the provisional multinational force, and helping to establish a safe and stable environment in Haiti, which involved its support in many areas of the political and security spheres, as recalled in the relevant Council resolutions, until its replacement by the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti last year.

As a result of the aforementioned actions and of the review by the Secretary-General, as requested in

resolution 2350 (2017), the Government, the legislature, the judiciary and the Haitian National Police have actively worked with the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti to develop a strategy that sets out 11 benchmarks that need to be met in Haiti by the last quarter of 2019. We would like to express our appreciation and congratulations to the Government of Haiti for the strong political will and leadership it demonstrated during that exercise, which at the end of next year should lead to a transition whereby the United Nations country team can fully assume its role of supporting the development of Haiti. The 11 benchmarks to be met are very ambitious but achievable if both the Mission and the international community resolutely support the Government of Haiti to attain them by making it possible at all times for the Government to lead the process with the active support and advice of the Mission.

In a process such as that on which Haiti has embarked, it is necessary to take into consideration any limitations that may impede such an undertaking. In that regard, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea draws the attention of the United Nations and the international community to the cholera situation that persists in Haiti, which is finally being controlled. The fight against the pandemic to ensure that it does not recur must be a high priority, since that situation affects not only health and water resources but also the development and stability of Haiti.

I would like to conclude this statement by supporting the United Nations Mission for Justice Support and by calling on all State institutions of Haiti — the Government, Parliament, the judicial bodies and the National Police — and civil society to work closely together in cooperation with and support of President Juvenal Moïse in his reform agenda to promote the sustainable development of Haiti, for which respect for the rule of law and human rights, good governance, respect for State authority and the strengthening of the legal and judicial institutions of Haiti are essential.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his informative briefing.

Let me also inform the Council that Poland associates itself with the statement to be delivered later today by the observer of the European Union.

Haiti is a land of great beauty and great suffering. Despite obstacles, the progress made by Haitians under the leadership of President Jovenel Moïse is very impressive. The spate of changes has had a positive impact on the daily life of Haitians in various areas. It is important for the Government to continue its efforts. It is worth emphasizing that it has taken steps to reform the criminal code and code of criminal procedure, fight corruption in the civil service and strengthen the justice sector. The improvement in the capacity of the Haitian National Police is also remarkable.

Such efforts should lead to major political stabilization and further strengthen the principles of the rule of law, which is an indispensable element of preserving sustainable development. Poland thanks the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) for its crucial role in assisting the Haitian Government to strengthen rule-of-law institutions, reinforce national police capacity and engage in human rights monitoring.

The smooth transition from the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti to the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti during the first six months looks very promising. Nonetheless, Haitian institutions still need the support of the international community. We welcome the contribution of MINUJUSTH to improve public security by building the capacity of the Haitian National Police in a wide range of police activities, providing equipment and operational support. To continue that progress, the vacancy rate within the Mission should be lowered. We call on the Secretariat to remove all remaining obstacles to filling the remaining vacancies.

I would like to laud the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy for Haiti, Ms. Josette Sheeran, to mobilize the private sector in the areas of finance, health and technology in an effort to support the Haitian Government and its people, contribute to Haiti's ambitious development goals and help attract investment. Additional efforts to enhance response capacity in investigating and preventing sexual and gender-based violations and incidents are necessary. Prison overcrowding raises serious human rights concerns, as does the lack of progress on the appointment of a senior governmental focal point to chair the body responsible for the development of national action plans on human rights. We call on the Government to redouble its efforts in those areas.

Like other States Members of the United Nations, Haiti has the undeniable right to create and maintain

its national armed forces. Given budgetary limitations and the pressing need to further develop the capabilities of its national police force, we expect the Haitian authorities to be judicious in choosing their next steps on the path to sustainable growth, taking into account the considerably reduced presence of the international community on the island.

Poland welcomes the proposal of 11 ambitious benchmarks for an exit strategy and transition to a non-peacekeeping United Nations presence in Haiti. MINUJUSTH will be a crucial actor in that process, helping the Government to meet the benchmarks by providing all necessary expertise and assistance. Furthermore, we should not limit the presence of the United Nations in Haiti or withdraw it too early, bearing in mind the fragility of the situation and the great deal of work to be conducted by elected Haitian authorities. While some see gaps, we see opportunities. We would like to see a prosperous Haiti without a constant peacekeeping presence. As the Haitian proverb says, a borrowed drum never makes for good dancing.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): Since this is our first meeting this month, let me join others in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency. I would like to assure you of our full support as you carry out your duties.

I would also like to commend Ambassador Van Oosterom and his team on a successful presidency last month.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2018/241) on the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), based on resolution 2350 (2017). We thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing on the most recent developments in Haiti and the activities of MINUJUSTH over the past six months. We take note of his recent visit to Haiti and discussions held with Haitian authorities to address ways and means to enhance cooperation and prepare for the transition to a non-United Nations peacekeeping presence that would continue to support Haiti's peacebuilding endeavours.

In that regard, we welcome the development of an exit strategy for MINUJUSTH, which was developed over the past three months in close consultation with Haitian stakeholders, outlining clear benchmarks for a staggered withdrawal over a two-year time frame, based on results achieved and the situation on the ground. Accordingly, we support the renewal of the mandate of MINUJUSTH for one year. The establishment of the Mission is indeed very important in order to consolidate peace by strengthening justice and rule-of-law institutions and supporting the institutional and operational capacity of the Haitian National Police. The renewal of its mandate will enable it to continue assisting the Government to strengthen rule-of-law institutions.

We appreciate the initiatives and efforts being undertaken by the Mission to build the capacities of the Haitian police in strategic and operational planning, criminal intelligence, investigations, organized crime, crime-scene management, recruitment, training, gender mainstreaming, crowd control, information technology, communication, logistics and infrastructure maintenance. However, we note the challenges being faced in the area of justice and corrections and the efforts of MINUJUSTH to address them, as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General.

We welcome continuous progress in Haiti towards consolidating its democracy and institutional stability, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General. We also take note of the progress made in the overall security situation in the country, which remains relatively stable. Nonetheless, we understand that Haiti continues to face enormous challenges and vulnerabilities. Therefore, decisive steps must be taken towards creating greater social and political cohesion and reinforcing State institutions in order to sustain the gains made in recent years. In that regard, we take note of the various initiatives of the President of the Republic of Haiti and hope that MINUJUSTH will provide the necessary support by working closely with the Government, civil society organizations and others.

The sustained and coordinated engagement of all bilateral and international partners is very critical to securing sufficient and timely assistance for the sustainable development of Haiti in a manner that respects its sovereignty. We hope that the new partnership established between Haiti and the United Nations, with the establishment of MINUJUSTH, will lay a solid foundation for long-term stability and sustainable development in Haiti.

We welcome the approval by the Peacebuilding Fund of a new $3-million conflict prevention and social cohesion project to strengthen the role of the youth by facilitating better participation of young women and men in community affairs and peaceful conflict

resolution. We also recognize regional and subregional organizations, in particular the Organization of American States, the Union of South American Nations and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), for their important role in the process of the stabilization and reconstruction of Haiti. We note that Haiti has now assumed the chairmanship of CARICOM and hosted a summit meeting of the organization last month in Port-au-Prince. Finally, we thank the police-contributing countries of MINUJUSTH, the United Nations country team and other international partners operating on the ground for their continued support to Haiti.

I wish to conclude by reiterating our solidarity with the brotherly people and Government of Haiti as they continue striving to consolidate the progress made in recent years and address the multiple challenges facing their nation.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation congratulates Peru on its assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of April and assures it of our full support. We also commend the Kingdom of the Netherlands on its presidency for the month of March and on its outstanding conduct of the work of the Security Council.

My delegation thanks the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, for his informative briefing on recent developments in the Republic of Haiti, as well as on the activities of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH).

The establishment of MINUJUSTH on 16 October 2017 was an important part of the transition towards a United Nations presence in Haiti that is not a peacekeeping operations, as provided for by Council resolution 2350 (2017). Echoing the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/241), my delegation welcomes the political, security and socioeconomic progress made in Haiti over the past year.

At the political level, my delegation appreciates the efforts undertaken by the Haitian authorities to strengthen the country's institutions, in particular the judiciary and the Haitian National Police. It also welcomes the measures aimed at strengthening the rule of law and the promotion and defence of human rights. My country remains convinced that these measures will certainly contribute to Haiti's progress on the path of development, as envisaged in the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework 2017-2021. To that end, it welcomes the visit made by Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, which reaffirmed the United Nations strategic partnership with Haiti in the context of support for the Haitian authorities in the area of sustaining peace and peacebuilding.

Côte d'Ivoire is convinced that the presence of MINUJUSTH is a real opportunity to consolidate the achievements and support the efforts of the Haitian Government to achieve the objectives of development and stability, with a view to the bringing the current peacekeeping operation to an end. In that regard, it welcomes the visit of Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to Haiti from 5 to 9 February, which gave her the opportunity to discuss issues relating to the gradual assumption of responsibility by the Haitian authorities in the field of justice and the rule of law, with a view to a successful withdrawal of the United Nations Mission. In that connection, my delegation supports the decision to establish in the near future, in collaboration with the Haitian Government, a mechanism to monitor progress in achieving the objectives of the crisis exit strategy, with a timetable and agreed indicators.

On the security front, the progress made in professionalizing the Haitian National Police must not make us lose sight of the fact that the overall situation in the country remains precarious. Côte d'Ivoire also encourages the Haitian authorities to pursue their efforts in the fight against corruption, in the protection and promotion of women's rights, as well as in the improvement of temporary detention procedures and the living conditions of the prison population.

On the socioeconomic front, my country remains concerned about the country's persistent vulnerability and the deplorable living conditions of vulnerable populations. In the light of the people's limited access to drinking water and poor sanitation, my country calls on the international community to support the work of the Haitian authorities in order to promptly respond to the expectations of the populations in need.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the progress made in the fight against cholera and supports the new strategy put in place by the Secretary-General to eradicate this pandemic. In that regard, my country welcomes the commitment of the United Nations, alongside the Government and people of Haiti, to consolidating the progress made and to find satisfactory responses to ongoing challenges. We therefore urge the international

community to support the economic and social development under way in Haiti.

In conclusion, my delegation commends the work of the United Nations country team in Haiti and MINUJUSTH, and encourages the Security Council to provide them with the necessary means to ensure the success of the Mission within the framework of the renewal of the mandate of MINUJUSTH. I would also like to reaffirm the readiness of my country — which, thanks to the support of the United Nations, has emerged from a decade of crisis — to contribute, alongside the other members of the Security Council, to bolstering stability, economic growth and social development in Haiti.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate your friendly country, Mr. President, o assuming the presidency of the Council for this month. We assure you that the State of Kuwait will support you throughout your presidency term. We are fully confident that your wisdom and experience will help guide the work of the Council during this month. I would also like to thank all the members of the delegation of the Netherlands for the excellent and successful work done with professionalism and transparency during the month of March.

As part of today's debate, I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing on the developments in Haiti and the role of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti in accordance with its mandate.

I should like to address three aspects related to our today's topic: politics, security and the humanitarian dimension.

First, on the political aspect, I commend the work of President Moïse as he consults with the Haitian Parliament on a legislative agenda that would establish a permanent electoral council and a constitutional council, in addition to finalizing appointments in the Supreme Court. We look forward to the enactment without delay of key legislation, including the penal code and the code of criminal procedure. We call upon the relevant authorities in Haiti to participate actively in consultations in order to positively impact the justice system.

Secondly, on the security aspect, we note that security affects all other areas in Haiti. We therefore welcome the marked improvement in security as crime rates have gone down in Haiti. Nevertheless, we call upon the national authorities to maximize the benefit of United Nations experience in the area of justice so as to improve the capacity and efficiency of the Haitian National Police. That would consolidate the gains achieved in the security sector and promote rule of law institutions, end impunity and prevent corruption. We commend the President's two initiatives in that connection.

Thirdly, on the humanitarian aspect, we are concerned about reports of violations of human rights. We hope that the Haitian national authorities will prosecute the perpetrators whether they are members of the National Police or not. That will ensure accountability and justice. In that context, we welcome the results of the United Nations plan for combating cholera, since the weekly infections have been reduced by more than 99 per cent. I would also like to commend the efforts of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), which is working to support and consolidate the gains that have already been made, in addition to strengthening stability and achieving long-term sustainable development in Haiti by supporting the Government's efforts to promote the rule of law.

In conclusion, based on the what I have said here, I would like to express our support for the Secretary-General's proposal that MINUJUSTH's mandate be extended to reflect the timeline defined by the benchmarked exit strategy. We support the report's contention that achieving the 11 benchmarks identified will facilitate the transition to a non-peacekeeping United Nations presence in Haiti. That would lead in the long term to fostering political, security and development stability in Haiti and will help to implement the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 16, which is aimed at promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development through providing access to justice for all.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate, and I also thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his briefing. China would like to congratulate Peru on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for April. Your delegation can count on our support in its work. We are also grateful to the Netherlands for the enormous amount of work it did during its presidency in March.

At the moment, Haiti is largely stable. Its security situation is steadily improving, and the Haitian National Police (HNP) is gradually assuming the responsibility for keeping the country safe, secure, and stable. China looks forward to seeing Haiti's various internal stakeholders maintaining the positive development momentum by intensifying their efforts to develop the economy, improve people's livelihoods, comprehensively implement the HNP's strategic development plan and create conditions conducive to improving the country's situation once and for all.

We are keen to see the international community, including the other countries in the region, continue to help improve the situation in Haiti, provide more development and humanitarian assistance and support Haiti in cementing peace and stability and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We commend the efforts of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) and Special Representative Susan Page to ensure the new Mission's smooth deployment and functioning. We hope to see the Secretariat and MINUJUSTH improving their communication with the Haitian Government, helping it to build a stronger HNP and supporting it in assuming responsibility for maintaining national security and stability in earnest.

Much has been achieved in the United Nations support for Haiti's response to the cholera epidemic. China has contributed to the United Nations Haiti Cholera Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund through the China-United Nations Peace and Development Fund. We call on the international community to respond positively to the new United Nations cholera response initiative and to help Haiti wipe out the epidemic once and for all. China stands ready to do its part, together with other members of the Council, to help Haiti achieve lasting peace, stability and sustainable development.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I would like to join my colleagues in congratulating you, Sir, on your presidency, and thanking the Netherlands for theirs. I also thank the Under-Secretary-General for his briefing. It was very good to have news of his visit in March and to see the degree to which the Security Council's mandate is being actively implemented.

The United Kingdom welcomes the continued progress in Haiti. We are particularly interested in the development of the Haitian National Police, the penal chain committee initiative and the efforts to strengthen the rule of law, and, like other speakers, we applaud the new United Nations approach to cholera. It is very good to see the dedication and support that the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) has given the Government of Haiti in carrying out its tasks. We are very interested in the way in which the Government is establishing a solid and sustainable foundation for Haiti's long-term political stability, security and development. As the Under-Secretary-General just said, this is a real vote of confidence in the country. It is good to hear that the Mission for Justice Support is actively implementing its mandate, and we now look to it to deliver a smooth transition to a non-peacekeeping United Nations presence. In particular, we support the Mission's intention to hand over responsibility for ensuring the rule of law, human rights and security sector reform to the United Nations country team and the Government of Haiti by October 2019. We want to ensure that the transition is a success. To that end, the United Kingdom urges the Government and the United Nations to take the following three steps.

First, the Government should take ownership of the delivery of critical reforms that will have a lasting impact on security and development. I want to particularly highlight the importance of protecting the independence of the police, enacting new legislation to empower the judiciary, ensuring that human rights are protected by strong State institutions and empowering women to be political leaders.

Secondly, we look to the United Nations to be a well-integrated organization on the ground that can ensure an effective transition by implementing the joint work plan. In particular, there should be a strong focus on collaboration between the country team and the Mission; support from the Peacebuilding Fund, as other colleagues have mentioned; flexible and coordinated partnerships between mobile teams and the country team; and close cooperation with other international and bilateral partners. I also join others in hoping to see an overall focus on the progress that can be made with the Sustainable Development Goals. The Secretary-General's report for May is eagerly awaited. We hope it will outline the progress needed to deliver an integrated and sustainable transition in the next 18 months.

Thirdly, the two-year exit strategy should demonstrate clear progress against the benchmarks that the Secretary-General has set. The plan for transferring responsibilities from the Mission to the country team is a complex one, and it makes the transition even more

complex than it inherently is. We hope that the Mission, in consultation with the Government, will be able to develop the necessary indicators. Using clear and realistic milestones will enable us to track progress. While we note that many colleagues and the Under-Secretary-General spoke about the fragility of the transition, we believe that if we have such milestones and benchmarks, they will reduce the risk associated with the exit strategy. In particular, the exit strategy should also be clearly aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2017-2021.

In conclusion, it is critical that the Mission and the Government work together in a spirit of solidarity and mutual respect and trust. Where the United Kingdom can help, the Council can count on it to do so. At this point, I would like to mention the sad history of sexual exploitation and abuse that Haiti has witnessed and to say that we will work with the Secretary-General to ensure the implementation of the zero-tolerance policy throughout the whole of the United Nations.

The time remaining to meet the transition target of October 2019 is now limited. We hope to see the adoption of a clear transition plan that will set out how we will move from peacekeeping to development. What Mr. Lacroix said in that regard was very encouraging. However, we do urge the Secretary-General to be realistic and clear with regard to the division of responsibilities across the United Nations system. It is ultimately the Government of Haiti's leadership that will make the transition a success but, as other speakers have noted, where we are now presents us with an enormous opportunity for achieving a successful outcome not just for the Government of Haiti but for the entire United Nations family and for peacekeeping in general.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to warmly congratulate the delegation of the Netherlands on its presidency of the Security Council last month and, on behalf of France, offer our full support for the Peruvian presidency.

I thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, for his very enlightening briefing on the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH).

France aligns itself with the statements to be made by the observer of the European Union and by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Haiti.

Following the remarkable work done by the women and men of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, at great risk to their lives — as was the case in the 2010 earthquake — MINUJUSTH took up the effort by focusing on three tasks: strengthening the Haitian National Police and the rule of law, and monitoring the human rights situation. I should like to come back to these three axes of MINUJUSTH's work during my statement.

The first point I wish to address is the strengthening and the role of the Haitian National Police. The stability of the country depends on its ability to train and field police personnel able to contribute to building social peace. It is their presence on the ground that often helps to ease tensions, as we have seen with the significant decrease in crime. In order to maintain this positive trend, MINUJUSTH must enjoy the means to support the Police Force in optimal conditions during its operations on the Haitian territory, including with the support of air and medical capabilities.

This international support, however, represents only a transition towards full ownership by the Haitian authorities of the maintenance of public order. Indeed, all the efforts of the United Nations Mission are now focused on developing a National Police that will be increasingly capable of independently fulfilling its missions without international support, from decision-making to the deployment of police officers on the ground. It is therefore up to the Haitian Government to ensure the successful training of more than 15,000 police officers in order to guarantee order and justice.

The second part of the MINUJUSTH mandate is the strengthening of the rule of law on which social, economic and political stability is based. We commend the drafting and adopting of legislative texts jointly carried out by the Haitian Government and Parliament in 2017. France will pay particular attention to the next steps, in particular the enacting of a penal code and a code of criminal procedure, which will be criticial before the MINUJUSTH mandate comes to an end.

As with the Haitian National Police, the successes achieved through international support, including the good offices of the Special Representative, now depend on the resolve of the Haitian authorities to take ownership of the work done so far. This political commitment is crucial in the fight against the scourge

of corruption, which weakens democracy. We welcome the announcements issued by the Haitian Government, especially with respect to corruption, and encourage it to take all measures necessary to strengthen the rule of law, which is a prerequisite for the development of the country.

I will end on the issue of human rights, which are the keystone of the maintenance of peace and international security in Haiti. All the objectives that the international community has set for itself in that country — strengthening the Haitian National Police, strengthening the rule of law and the sustainable development of the country — depend above all on an active and ambitious human rights policy.

France calls for the careful monitoring of this significant issue in the implementation of the mandate of MINUJUSTH, always bearing in mind the objective of the assumption of ownership by the Haitian authorities and civil society, which is the sole guarantor of the progress that can be accomplished in all aspects of human rights. I will cite but a few: the improvement of the penitentiary system, the defence of women's rights, and respect for the rights of Haitian citizens vis-à-vis the State. The United Nations also has a full role to play and will have to continue to pay close attention to the fight against sexual abuse in particular.

In conclusion, we call for the renewal of the mandate of MINUJUSTH before embarking on a transition to a new form of the United Nations presence in Haiti. The United Nations and France continue and will continue to stand alongside the Haitian people, whose courage in the face of adversity deserves our greatest admiration. We recall in that regard the suffering endured as a result of the tragic cholera epidemic, which is now on the verge of eradication. Given the successes observed in recent years in many areas, a stable Haiti firmly on the path of development must be our shared ambition.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): Let me join others in congratulating you, Sir, and your team on assuming the Council presidency and in thanking our Dutch colleagues for their outstanding work in the month of March.

I thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his briefing.

I associate myself with the statement that will be made by the observer of the European Union later this morning.

Sweden commends Haiti for the achievements it has made in the consolidation of democracy, stability and peace. Progress is now needed on the priorities that President Moïse and his Government have set out, including the rule of law, respect for human rights, improved socioeconomic development, infrastructure, resilience and security. These are priorities with which the mandate of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) is also aligned. The Government must now spare no effort in delivering on its commitments, with the support of the international community.

The benchmarks presented in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/241) will help support these efforts by linking progress in the core areas of the Mission's mandate with other key preconditions for stability in the country. As the Council has stated before, it is important to ensure a clear end state for the Mission to work towards. Adequate planning is needed for a future hand-over to the United Nations country team in the spirit of sustaining peace. As more and more tasks are given to the United Nations country team, donors must step up to ensure that the United Nations agencies have adequate resources and capacity to effectively support the peacebuilding process in Haiti.

It is important that MINUJUSTH continue to integrate gender throughout its work, including measures to increase women's security and participation, as well as to ensure protection against sexual and gender-based violence. Integrating gender is also key to gender-budgeting and to ensure adequate information-gathering, monitoring and reporting.

MINUJUSTH was created as a rule-of-law mission, and, as with other United Nations missions, it is vital to have an integrated rule-of-law approach that encompasses the whole justice chain, from police and corrections to prosecution and courts. In this vein, Sweden continues to contribute both police and corrections personnel to MINUJUSTH. The Mission's police component's mentorship and advice to its counterparts in the Haitian National Police are a part of the transition strategy, and we are encouraged by the work being undertaken in that area. We know from experience that policing and other rule-of-law institutions play an important role in providing a bridge between security and development in transition processes.

MINUJUSTH is the only current United Nations peacekeeping mission that consists solely of civilian and

police components. We should draw on this experience when looking at the drawdown and transition of other United Nations peace operations. This is in line with the Council's ambition to take more phased and layered approaches to transitions and drawdowns in peacekeeping operations.

We welcome the efforts described in the report to strengthen protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. We need to continue to ensure that alleged cases of sexual exploitation and abuse are reported and investigated, and that all necessary steps are taken to apply disciplinary measures and/or undertake criminal prosecutions to hold perpetrators accountable.

We were happy to co-sponsor the General Assembly resolution 72/260 in support of the Secretary-General's new approach to eradicating cholera and building resilience in Haiti. We have supported the United Nations Haiti Cholera Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund and encourage others to contribute to it in a collective effort to bring an end to cholera in Haiti.

In conclusion, much has been achieved by the Haitian people in recent years. The establishment of MINUJUSTH provides an opportunity for a reinvigorated partnership with Haiti towards longer-term stability and sustainable development. We will remain a committed partner for Haiti as it continues its efforts to consolidate democracy, stability and peace.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General after the transformation of the Organization's presence in Haiti into the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti. We consider the assessments made following his own recent visit to Haiti, from 14 to 15 March, especially useful.

Since the middle of October of last year, when the Mission began its work in its new format, we have seen some unquestionably encouraging progress. We welcome the efforts of Haiti's leadership to ensure stability and establish effective Government administration systems that rely on its own strengths. In that regard, we are closely monitoring the implementation of President Jovenel Moïse's Caravan of Change initiative. Coordinated and collaborative work on the part of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of power will be crucial to overcoming the country's internal problems and laying a firm foundation for sustainable economic development. We note Haiti's increased participation in the work of international and regional organizations. In January it took on the rotating chairship of the Caribbean Community and joined the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Quartet. The gradual, step-by-step progress has enabled the Council to begin to carefully consider the Secretary-General's preliminary proposal for establishing benchmarks for the Mission's exit preparedness and handing over its functions directly to the Government and the United Nations country team. In that regard, as with any other peacekeeping operation, it is important at every stage to take into account not only the views of the host Government but also the principle of national ownership.

However, there is still a great deal of work to do, both for the country's authorities, which are being called on to become more self-reliant and independent of international support every day, as well as for the United Nations staff whose job is to provide them with the maximum support. That thorough, painstaking support is vital to the Government, which, taking the Haitian people's views into consideration, must strive to identify its priorities and tasks on the security, politics, development and peacebuilding fronts. We should add that it is just as important to ensure that all national stakeholders understand the concept of shared responsibility for sustaining peace.

The ongoing serious humanitarian situation is still very worrying, since Haiti is still grappling with the effects of Hurricane Matthew. Also, despite the fact that people who were obliged to move to neighbouring States are now returning to Haiti is a very good sign, their growing numbers represent a special responsibility for the leadership of a country where 1 million people still need humanitarian aid.

We are pleased with the Secretary-General's information on the gradual improvement in the security situation and the falling crime statistics, including for sexual offences. We hope that the strengthening of the National Haitian Police's numbers to reach a total of 15,300 personnel, 9 per cent of whom are women, will help to achieve even greater progress. Against that background, the reports by representatives of Haitian civil society of sexual crimes committed by representatives of foreign non-governmental organizations are extremely worrying, and in the context of the ongoing efforts within the United Nations to combat such shocking offences, we urge the Mission

not to ignore such scandalous examples. These are very grave crimes that tarnish the image of international support generally. Any such reports should be investigated and those found to be responsible should not escape the punishment they deserve.

The Council will soon have to agree on the draft resolution that will extend the Mission's mandate for a year. In accordance with its mandate, the Mission will continue to assist the host country in ensuring the rule of law and strengthening the capacity of its law-enforcement bodies. The Council must be certain that adequate account is taken of the realities of the country's situation, including with regard to the Mission's structure, something that the Secretary-General also brings up in his report.

In conclusion, I would like to affirm our support to the Government and the people of Haiti, who have to overcome the destructive legacies of natural disasters as well as their domestic problems on their road to stability and prosperity. In order to ensure that they can recover more quickly, they need a strong State and a cohesive society through whose joint efforts they can build and strengthen Haiti's potential.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We join our colleagues in congratulating your delegation, Mr. President, on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month, and would like to assure you of our full support. We also commend the delegation of the Netherlands for its excellent work in leading us during the month of March. I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his comprehensive briefing and recent visit to Haiti.

At the outset, we would like to congratulate the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) and its leadership on its smooth transition and its launch of a number of important projects and initiatives in close cooperation with the Government and civil society of Haiti. Kazakhstan also commends the efforts that President Moïse and his Government have made over the past year to promote stability, security, economic development and social change in their country. We especially welcome their initiative to begin a political dialogue with all the key national sectors aimed at determining and defining negotiated plans for the country's sustainable development over the next 25 years. It is also worthy of note that a review process will be launched to assess Haiti's development aid cooperation mechanism with the international community, with a view to shifting from external assistance to external investment.

While we recognize the significant progress that has been made in improving the political and security environments, some key issues in a number of priority areas have yet to be addressed, including the establishment of a Permanent Electoral Council, improvements in the justice sector, prison overcrowding, prolonged pretrial detentions and the overall humanitarian situation. In that regard, Kazakhstan fully supports the Secretary-General's call for MINUJUSTH and its partners to establish a joint programme of work and undertake joint actions addressing such major issues as reforming the justice system, enhancing human rights, reforming the police and prison systems and ensuring the rule of law in Haiti. Promoting political engagement will also be crucial, in view of the forthcoming elections.

With a view to consolidating stability and security, MINUJUSTH should maintain its focus on building the capacity of the Haitian National Police and undertaking serious efforts to combat impunity, ensuring the judiciary's independence and establishing a transparent and efficient corrections system. We urge the Government of Haiti to make sure that the Haitian National Police's strategic development plan is implemented efficiently and in a timely manner, with the help of the international community in raising professional training and experience.

We should now focus on ensuring that the benchmarked exit strategy is formulated and implemented in a coordinated manner. It will be essential to maintain an ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders, particularly the Haitian Government, in order to achieve our common goals and a smooth transition to a non-peacekeeping United Nations presence in Haiti. In this context, it will be critical for MINUJUSTH and the United Nations country team to work in coordination with the United Nations system as a whole, ensuring that the Organization delivers with greater efficiency, transparency and accountability as one United Nations, breaking down silos to achieve optimal results for sustainable development in Haiti.

The effective involvement of the international community and regional partners should also have a positive impact on our joint efforts. Haiti's current chairship of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) presents a great opportunity for mobilizing international partnerships to address the most pressing

problems facing the country and the region. In the past three years Kazakhstan has supported two joint development projects with CARICOM. We also provided humanitarian aid after last year's devastating hurricanes, in addition to supporting Haiti bilaterally.

While we recognize that the fight against cholera has made significant gains, the issue should remain a high priority for the entire United Nations community. In that regard, we welcomed Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and Special Envoy Josette Sheeran's visit to co-chair a high-level cholera meeting with the Haitian Government aimed at achieving zero transmissions of the disease in Haiti.

In conclusion, we would like to express our full support for the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend MINUJUSTH's mandate. Kazakhstan will continue to firmly support Haiti's efforts to achieve peace, progress and prosperity.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would now like to make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Peru.

I would first like to thank the delegations that have wished us well for Peru's assumption of the presidency for the month of April. We also thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing and welcome the presence here today of Ambassador Régis.

Peru is committed to sustaining peace in our brother country of Haiti. As a troop-contributing country we sent some 6,000 troops there over the 13 years of existence of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, which worked to maintain stability in the country, and we associate ourselves with the statement that the representative of Canada will make today on behalf of the Group of Friends of Haiti. Peru has been closely following the positive developments of recent years and the role played by the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) in strengthening the national institutions that are called on to ensure access to justice, the rule of law and the safeguarding of human rights, and in enabling an orderly and viable transition to sustainable peace in Haiti.

We would like to highlight three elements that we consider essential in renewing MINUJUSTH's mandate. The first is the importance of continuing to support efforts to build institutions capable of protecting human rights and ensuring access to justice in Haiti. We believe that this is a fundamental element of MINUJUSTH's mandate that cuts across all of its the activities. Such activities must rely on specific approaches to protecting women's and children's rights and fighting corruption and impunity. The latter includes ensuring due process, dealing with legal proceedings expeditiously and providing adequate prison conditions.

The second is the importance of coordinating efforts effectively to ensure an orderly and feasible transition to sustainable peace and development in Haiti. That means strengthening the United Nations presence in the country in supporting national efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as promoting partnerships with various stakeholders, including international financial institutions, regional and subregional organizations, the private sector and civil society. We should also foster greater participation by women and young people in building a viable future.

The third is the urgency of combating cholera. We welcome the significant efforts that Secretary-General António Guterres has made in that area and stress how important it is that the international community increase its support for such efforts.

In the light of all of these issues, Peru supports the renewal and extension of the mandate of MINUJUSTH for an additional year, with a view to moving forward with a transition process based on the conditions on the ground and ensuring stability and economic and social progress.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council

I give the floor to the representative of Haiti.

Mr. Régis (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for inviting the Government of the Republic of Haiti to present its views and observations on the first report of the Secretary-General, dated 20 March 2018 (S/2018/241), on the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH).

On 15 October 2017, we turned a page. After taking stock of the 13 years of its presence in Haiti, with its successes but also its dark times, the Security Council decided to end the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in the light of the major advances made in the three key areas of security and stability, building the rule of law and promoting human rights. In fact, MINUJUSTH

was established to address a situation that in no way corresponded to the one that existed in 2004 and which the Council considered a threat to international peace in the region. A new order of things has emerged in Haiti today.

The Government of Haiti is pleased that the Secretary-General has underscored the positive developments in the country over the past 14 months, rightly highlighting the progress made by President Jovenel Moïse in implementing his programme of reform for promoting sustainable development. Haiti is at peace today. In the wake of the democratic 2017 elections, institutional stability and the rule of law have been restored and the democratic achievements consolidated. The institutions provided for in the Constitution are functioning normally. The process of establishing a Permanent Electoral Council is moving forward. Human rights are respected and guaranteed. This is the new reality for a country that, while it is facing major challenges, nonetheless is enjoying a secure and stable environment, as anyone can see.

In this context of stability and renewed political certainty, significant results have already been achieved in various key areas, including the improvement of the security environment, progress in good governance, respect for the rule of law and the relaunching of the development process. Among the indicators of progress that the Secretary-General mentions in his report, I am pleased to note the sharp decline in violent crime, which has fallen by almost 50 per cent compared to the same period last year; the strengthened fight against corruption in the Administration, including in the PetroCaribe Fund matter, which has been officially referred to the Superior Court of Audits and Administrative Disputes by Parliament, in accordance with the Constitution and for the purposes of the law; the priority given by the Government and the Parliament to institutional reforms aimed at strengthening the rule of law and, in particular, modernizing the justice sector, including the prison system. In that regard, the adoption of a new criminal code and code of criminal procedure is high on the legislative agenda. Other indicators of progress worthy of our attention today are the ongoing establishment or re-establishment of key institutions provided for by the Constitution; the appointment of a national Ombudsperson, through the process provided for by the new Constitution; and the increased professionalization of and capacity-building in the Haitian National Police.

Furthermore, with regard to structural reforms, the initiative of the États généraux sectoriels launched by the Head of State aims to promote inclusive political dialogue at the national level with a view to carrying out the necessary social contract renewal and the recovery of the Haitian economy, in tandem with the strategy of the Caravane du changement initiative, the results of which aim to open up regions, increase the participation of rural populations in changing their destiny and future and promote local development based on national production.

The Government is aware that there remains work to do. It intends to continue along the path of reform. It took note of the observations made in the Secretary-General's report, as well as the conclusions and the recommendations. It is sensitive to issues relating to access to justice, the strengthening of the judicial system and the lack of respect for human rights, of which prolonged pretrial detention and prison overcrowding are deplorable manifestations. Answers are being given. Those problems are the result of decades of neglect, structural handicaps and bottlenecks that local Governments are striving to gradually, consistently and methodically correct. It will, in any case, take time to complete, which calls for ongoing and persevering action over the long-term. In that sense, the Government of the Republic of Haiti believes that a technical assistance mission to strengthen justice would therefore represent an alternative that is more in line with the evolution of the situation on the ground.

The Government noted the concerns raised in relation to the isolated cases of human rights abuses perpetrated by law enforcement officials. The rule of law is not divided. The two incidents mentioned in the report — like all incidents attributable to State bodies — are receiving the most serious attention from the competent authorities. Once responsibility is established, justice will take its course. Pending the outcome of the judicial process, the public officials concerned are subject to the relevant administrative penalties.

In accordance with the commitments undertaken by the Republic of Haiti within the framework of international and regional treaties to which it is party, the Haitian Government is making every effort to ensure full respect for fundamental rights and freedoms by all State institutions, without exception. The appointment, last October, of the Ombudsman was part of the commitment to make the promotion, protection

and defence of human rights a reality. It goes without saying that the plan of action of that structure includes the implementation of the various recommendations made by the relevant United Nations bodies, including the Human Rights Council.

The Government greatly welcomes the major advances made in recent months, in particular the implementation of a legal provision requiring it to financially contribute to the institutionalization of political life in the country by granting a financial sum to legally recognized political parties that have a certain number of elected representatives in Parliament and local authorities. That measure, which has been acknowledged by the stakeholders and to which most of the political groups have subscribed, aims to provide them with the necessary resources for their modernization.

The stabilization achievements of recent months must, of course, be consolidated within the framework of broader cooperation, more in line with today's realities and the real needs of the country. In that regard, the Government wishes to reiterate the importance and value it attaches to the mandate that the Council has entrusted to MINUJUSTH, namely, to assist the Government of Haiti to consolidate rule-of-law institutions, support and build the capacity of the Haitian National Police and monitor the human rights situation.

MINUJUSTH, as we understand it and as its parameters have been clearly defined, has a different perspective from the previous stabilization-focused mission. Above all, it is intended to be a mechanism to complement and consolidate the gains already achieved. Its time frame therefore can only be limited. Consequently, the Government is taking into account the withdrawal strategy proposed by the Secretary-General, in accordance with the timetable to be established by both parties, based on agreed milestones and benchmarks. Similarly, as the Government has stated, it supports an evolution of the Mission towards a United Nations presence within a capacity-building framework as part of peacekeeping.

As resolution 2350 (2017) sets forth, MINUJUSTH is essentially intended to provide technical assistance to strengthen Haitian institutions that guarantee the rule of law — primarily the justice system — it being understood that national institutions have primary responsibility for development and all aspects of governance, security, justice, the protection of human rights and the fight against corruption in all its forms and in all components of society.

In that spirit, the Haitian Government wishes to see continued cooperation between Haiti and the United Nations, within the framework of a strong partnership that truly promotes new progress in all sectors of the rule of law, as well as the promotion of all human rights — civilian, political, economic, social and cultural — while making a powerful contribution to reaching the country's sustainable development goals. None of that will be possible without scrupulous respect for each other's obligations and without a genuine spirit of solidarity, mutual respect and trust, as the Secretary-General has rightly stressed in his report.

The sustainability of peace and sustainable development go hand in hand. Therefore, for lasting stability in Haiti, it is essential to simultaneously advance the consolidation of the rule of law, the promotion of human rights, reconstruction and the social and economic development of the country. The Government of the Republic of Haiti is channelling all its resources and energy into addressing urgent humanitarian challenges and addressing the underlying problems of extreme poverty and insecurity. As always, it welcomes all support from its technical and financial partners, as called for in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action. That is why the Government reiterates its hope for support from the international community to promote the conditions for vigorous growth, poverty reduction and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

The Government enthusiastically welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative on the Haiti transformation retreat. It fervently hopes that this promising initiative will bear the expected fruits, and that it will pave the way for new prospects for development financing in Haiti, especially of the essential infrastructure that is so needed.

I cannot fail to mention the cholera epidemic, the terrible consequences of which everyone knows and which continues to rage despite the significant recent progress in preventing and combating that scourge. My delegation hopes in particular that the new initiative of the Secretary-General will finally enable the new two-pronged United Nations approach to cholera in Haiti to be realized. Let us recall that to date, the United

Nations Haiti Cholera Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund has raised only a little more than $7 million, which is clearly well below the $400 million required. The Haitian Government calls for a burst of goodwill and the exploration of innovative and predictable funding to establish the Fund, as planned, so that the victims, their relatives and their beneficiaries can receive just compensation, which is their due, and the health-care, drinking-water and sanitation infrastructure, acknowledged as essential to the complete elimination of cholera and other water-borne diseases, can be established.

In conclusion, I wish to assure the members of the Council of the full readiness of the Head of State, Mr. Jovenel Moïse, the Prime Minister, Mr. Jack Guy Lafontant, and the Government of Haiti to deepen the dialogue and to strengthen the many cooperation links with the Security Council, the Secretariat and all United Nations bodies with a view to making further progress in ensuring the rule of law, strengthening justice and promoting human rights, which are at the heart of the mandate of MINUJUSTH. The Haitian authorities will continue to work consistently and decisively to ensure that the diversified cooperation, to which they attach the highest priority, delivers on its promises and fully meets the national aspirations of the Haitian people and the shared expectations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Vale De Almeida (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its 28 member States. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2018/241), and Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing. I also welcome the presence of our colleague the Permanent Representative of Haiti at this meeting.

The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

On 13 April 2017, the Security Council adopted resolution 2350 (2017), which ended the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti on 15 October 2017. The resolution sets out the legal framework for the transition to the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), whose primary objective is strengthening the rule of law and the Haitian National Police, as well as the promotion and protection of human rights.

The long cycle of institutional instability that characterized the electoral process in Haiti in 2015 and 2016 finally ended with the election of President Moïse and a new Parliament. As a long-standing supporter of the Haitian people, the European Union welcomes the country's return to constitutional normalcy despite the significant challenges facing it. In our view, that is a condition sine qua non for Haiti to be able to deal with the many political, economic, social and environmental challenges that it faces.

However, while a return to constitutional order is necessary condition, it is not enough to ensure the democratic stability and sustainable development that the country needs. The root causes of the instability persist. In our view, bold reforms of the Constitution, the electoral system and the judiciary are therefore urgent in order to restore the trust of the Haitian people in their democracy and their political system. It is particularly important to ensure true access for all to fair, equitable and effective justice. Signs of a willingness to reform are evident. We must now realize them and seize the historic opportunity provided by this period of relative stability and democratic legitimacy.

As in recent years, the efforts of all actors to ensure the stability and security of citizens will remain necessary to the process of democratic consolidation. As MINUJUSTH notes in the section entitled "Benchmarks for an exit strategy" (see S/2018/241, annex), consensus-based and profound reform of the electoral system would be key to preventing new crises and to regaining the trust of the population.

The European Union remains a committed and faithful partner of the Republic of Haiti. We are resolved to support the country in this sensitive phase, including in the necessary reform process that I have just mentioned, in consultation with all the other partners. The European Union appreciates and supports the work of MINUJUSTH focusing on the development of the Haitian National Police, the justice sector and the rule of law and on the promotion and protection of human rights.

Despite an improvement in the security situation thanks to the political stability over the past year, the

European Union believes that the structural causes of instability in Haiti still need to be addressed and that the security situation remains very fragile. We therefore believe that it is essential to complete the task of strengthening and professionalizing the Haitian National Police, to focus on the need for judicial and prison reform and, finally, to strengthen respect for human rights.

In that context, the ongoing implementation of the mandate of MINUJUSTH over a period of time sufficient for the transition of responsibilities to the country team to be completed and to deal with all those challenges seems to us essential. That time is necessary to make adequate progress in order to ensure genuine continuity following the withdrawal of the United Nations mission, as well as the irreversibility of the reforms carried out.

In conclusion, allow me to express the EU's positive assessment of the contribution of MINUJUSTH in terms of security, conflict prevention and strengthening democracy and the rule of law in Haiti. That contribution is attributable to its entire staff, its commitment and its skills, for which we warmly thank them all.

However, we already need to think about the future. In that regard, the modalities for the transition of MINUJUSTH are in our view fundamental. Special attention to respect for human rights in security work, as well as access to impartial justice for all, will be particularly necessary. It is essential that the Haitian National Police and judicial system be effectively prepared to assume in the future all the tasks currently undertaken by the United Nations Mission.

Together with the United Nations and the international community, the European Union will support the Haitian authorities so that they can strengthen their commitment and their efforts to ensure a better future of peace, democracy, stability and well-being for all Haitian people.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Blanchard (Canada): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Friends of Haiti, which includes Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, France, Guatemala, Peru, the United States of America, Uruguay and my country, Canada.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's important debate on the first day of your presidency to discuss the first six months of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH). We welcome the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2018/241). The Group would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his insightful and comprehensive briefing.

(*spoke in French*)

I would like to thank my colleague Ambassador Denis Régis for his relevant and very useful comments on behalf of the Haitian Government.

(*spoke in English*)

The Group of Friends reaffirms its solidarity with, and commitment to, the people and the Government of Haiti in their pursuit of stability, socioeconomic development and democratic consolidation. Haiti continues to face multiple challenges that require the implementation of structural reforms. Progress remains essential in many areas, including on human rights, such as prolonged pre-trial detention and prison overcrowding, sexual and gender-based violence, greater participation of women in decision-making processes, reform and strengthening of the justice sector and enhancement of social services. While much still remains to be done, nevertheless the Group acknowledges and welcomes the important and necessary steps that the Haitian Government has already taken to achieve greater security, stability and prosperity in Haiti.

The Group of Friends would like to stress the importance of strengthening the fight against corruption, putting an end to impunity and ensuring accountability in Haiti. Strengthening the rule of law and democratic institutions is key to achieving long-term stability and prosperity in Haiti. In that regard, the Group of Friends welcomes the commitment of the United Nations to support the consolidation of previous gains and peacebuilding goals, which is creating space for the promotion of greater stability and sustainable development in Haiti.

The Group of Friends recognizes the important work undertaken by MINUJUSTH since its creation, including assisting the Government of Haiti in further developing the Haitian National Police, strengthening rule-of-law institutions and engaging in human rights monitoring, reporting and analysis. To succeed in the long term, that work must continue in close coordination with the Government and through national ownership.

The Group of Friends also encourages continued close collaboration between MINUJUSTH and the United Nations country team.

From my own personal observations on the ground in Haiti, I would like to underscore that it is important for MINUJUSTH to focus on strengthening the legal infrastructure, as was stated by my colleague who spoke on behalf of the European Union, so as to create the right conditions for attracting investment to the country. Haiti is in dire need of investment to boost economic development. We know that investment will be made only if the rule of law is improved. Given the vital importance of the work it undertakes, the Group of Friends encourages and recommends that the Security Council support the extension of the mandate of the Mission for another year at the same level of resources, notably for its police component and with the intention to review the need for renewal as necessary.

We take note of the draft resolution's request to further refine the benchmarked exit strategy for MINUJUSTH. The Group looks forward to hearing more about the progress achieved in the related benchmarks. We would like to stress the importance of continued and close coordination and consultation with the Government of Haiti on those efforts. We underline the importance of carefully reviewing conditions on the ground and the importance of adjusting the Mission's presence accordingly to preserve the progress that Haiti has achieved in collaboration with the United Nations and the international community.

Finally, the Group of Friends of Haiti would like to draw attention to the progress that has been made in reducing the number of cases of cholera transmission and cholera-related fatalities in Haiti. Although promising, we encourage all Member States to continue to support the efforts of the United Nations to combat cholera in Haiti. The Group of Friends wishes to thank the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Josette Sheeran, for her continued efforts to mobilize support for this vital aspect of United Nations engagement in Haiti.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. Verdier (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, let me congratulate the delegation of the Netherlands on the way in which it guided the work of the Security Council in March. We very much welcome the fact that Peru is presiding over the work of the Council, and we wish it every success. We thank you, Sir, for convening today's debate. We also thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his briefing earlier today.

Argentina aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Haiti and would like to add the following brief remarks.

Argentina welcomes the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/241), which refers in particular to the development of a benchmarked exit strategy. Since the inception of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), we have stressed the fact that, above and beyond pre-set deadlines, the transition of the Mission to a United Nations presence of another kind must be based on the gradual fulfilment of its mandate in response to the situation on the ground. That would prevent the Mission's premature withdrawal, which could jeopardize all efforts made in the past 14 years. We also understand that the Mission should review the transition process in close cooperation with the Government of Haiti, while respecting its principles and priorities and taking into consideration the principle of national responsibility in the peacebuilding process.

Argentina underscores the fact that, when developing exit strategy benchmarks, it is important to harmonize the Mission's initiatives with the relevant elements of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2017-2021, while taking into account Haiti's efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 16.

Argentina highlights the progress made in implementing the Mission's important mandate, including assisting Haiti consolidating rule-of-law institutions, strengthening and fostering the professional development of the Haitian National Police and promoting and protecting human rights in the country, in spite of myriad ongoing challenges. In that regard, we underscore the efforts made by Haitian authorities, together with MINUJUSTH, to achieve lasting stability and improve the country's future. For example, considerable progress has been made in the fight against cholera, which should continue with the aim of eradicating the disease. We thank Special Envoy Josette Sheeran for marshalling the resources necessary, in particular through the Haiti Cholera

Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund, to which our country contributed.

In addition to continuing its bilateral cooperation, Argentina will continue to provide trained police personnel to the Mission, to the extent possible and based on specific requirements stipulated in the Secretary-General's transition strategy and the strategic development plan of the Haitian National Police for 2017-2021. We take note of the re-establishment of the country's armed formed forces in line with the sovereign decisions taken by the Haitian Government on security- and defence-related issues. We are confident that it will not jeopardize the effective implementation of the strategic development plan of the National Police.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Argentina's commitment to the Haitian people and to acknowledge the work of the police and civilian personnel of MINUJUSTH in fulfilment of its noble mission of assisting Haiti on its path to sustainable peace and development.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Ms. Domínguez Álvarez (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We commend the Netherlands on its presidency in the month of March and wish our neighbour Peru every success this month. We also wish to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, for his briefing, and Ambassador Denis Régis for his statement.

Chile aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Haiti, and would like to make the following additional observations.

The United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) and the United Nations country team in Haiti play a fundamental supporting role in Haiti with regard to its socioeconomic development, the strengthening of its institutions and respect for human rights. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation for the Security Council to broaden MINUJUSTH's mandate to reflect the timetable set by the gradual exit strategy that is clear and adapted to the realities on the ground. We cannot afford to lose what we have gained over the past 14 years on the path to stability and development.

We stress that conditions on the ground, coordination among all actors and, especially, the priorities of the Haitian Government must always be taken into account. That is particularly important if the United Nations is to successfully finalize its transition to a presence that will continue to support the Government's efforts towards peacekeeping and peacebuilding without a peacekeeping mission. We recognize that the Mission will be able to consolidate its gains over the past 14 years only with the close collaboration of all national actors and the active commitment of the international community. As a police-contributing country, we will continue working with the Organization to provide MINUJUSTH with adequate human resources to ensure the fulfilment of its important mandate.

Chile welcomes the significant reduction of cholera transmission and deaths in Haiti. We also recognize the progress made in the implementation of the United Nations new approach to cholera in Haiti through the recent selection of projects to be financed by the United Nations Haiti Cholera Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund, in line with tracks 1 and 2 of the new approach. We particularly welcome the consultative process with civil society, local leaders and cholera victims that was carried out to identify some of these projects with a view to improving the lives of victims and reducing the transmission of cholera to zero. We reiterate our support for the Special Envoy for Haiti, Ms. Josette Sheeran, in her important task of implementing the new strategy, and we call upon the international community and other actors to contribute to the Fund and other projects that support its strategy. Chile supplemented its contribution to the Trust Fund in February 2017 through its financial support of other water and sanitation projects, in keeping with track 1 of the new approach, and we hope to continue supporting such projects as long as necessary.

While the humanitarian situation in Haiti has improved significantly, we also note that there have also been various setbacks due to the increased intensity and frequency of natural disasters in the region. The context makes it even more important to address the underlying causes of vulnerability and to bolster the resilience of the country through preparation before disasters and rapid recovery after them.

In that connection, we welcome the 2017-2021 humanitarian response plan of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as the plan has integrated a broader perspective of the needs of the country with a view to breaking the cycle of humanitarian crises, while promoting investment

in advance and the humanitarian development nexus. We urge all Member States to support OCHA and the United Nations country team in the implementation of the humanitarian response plan, including contributing to the four areas of cooperation that OCHA has identified as the most beneficial to the consolidation of development in Haiti.

Chile hopes it can continue to contribute bilaterally, inter alia, to the management of natural disasters, the building of earthquake-resistant construction and the strengthening of the judicial system through the training of firefighters, community emergency response teams and judges, in line with Haiti's priorities.

In conclusion, we reiterate Chile's commitment to Haiti and its people, while reaffirming the importance of continuing to stand with this beautiful and sisterly nation, which is responsible for its own development.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Vieira (Brazil): We congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and thank you for convening this important debate.

We associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Haiti.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/241), which covers the initial six months of the operations of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH).

We note with satisfaction that the transition from the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and MINUJUSTH was carried out without negatively impacting the security situation, which attests to the orderly and gradual withdrawal of the military component of the former Mission and to the carefully executed transfer of responsibility to the Haitian National Police, supported by the remaining formed police units. It also attests to the success of MINUSTAH, which, for 13 years, helped Haitians to ensure a stable and secure environment, rebuild the country after natural disasters and prepare for the future.

MINUSTAH demonstrated the potential of innovative approaches that could serve as a model for future peacekeeping operations elsewhere in the world. We note in particular the coordination between civilian and military personnel on the ground, community outreach strategies as confidence-building measures and the important role of women in all areas of the stabilization process. During these 13 years, Brazil had the honour to lead MINUSTAH and to contribute more than 30,000 troops to the Mission.

As highlighted by the Secretary-General's report, the decline in homicide rates over the past few years has been maintained, with a decrease in the number of such crimes in the last quarter, as compared to the same period last year. However, it should be noted that, compared to the previous quarter, the number of homicides has increased, which serves as a reminder that the security situation is still precarious. In that regard, we recall the contributions for the stabilization of Haiti made by the implementation of quick-impact projects and community violence-reduction projects. We believe that such initiatives, which were successfully put in practice by MINUSTAH, should continue during MINUJUSTH's mandate.

We take note of the two-year exit strategy proposed by the Secretary-General for the transition to a non-peacekeeping United Nations presence in Haiti, as well as its 11 benchmarks, and we welcome the fact that the benchmarks were adopted in close consultation with the Government of Haiti. We believe that such consultation should continue during the implementation and review of the exit strategy. In that regard, we encourage both MINUJUSTH and the Government of Haiti to use the window of opportunity provided by the remaining duration of the Mission's mandate to put in practice ambitious reforms in the field of the rule of law. That would allow the country to consolidate stability gains achieved over the past 14 years and lay the groundwork for sustainable and inclusive long-term socioeconomic development.

In conclusion, we would like to encourage the extension of the MINUJUSTH mandate for another year and the maintenance of its budgetary and police components. We would prefer, however, that the references to Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations in the mandate be circumscribed to operational activities of the police component of the Mission. While recalling the need to plan carefully the practical steps for the implementation of the exit strategy, we believe that the Council should continuously assess the situation on the ground and revise its plans, if need be.

Brazil is firmly committed to its long-term engagement and solidarity with Haiti. Our peacekeepers have left, but our engagement remains steady, as evidenced by the growing portfolio of bilateral technical cooperation projects.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mr. Carlier González (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, let me congratulate the Kingdom of the Netherlands for its successful presidency of the Security Council for the month of March and to convey to you, Sir, my delegation's sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. We wish you every success in your functions.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2018/241) on the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), and in particular thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his briefing marking the Mission's first six months of operations.

Colombia aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Haiti.

We are pleased to note that Haiti has continued to move forward in consolidating the country's democracy and stability. We note with satisfaction that the transition from the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti to MINUJUSTH has gone smoothly, and that the MINUJUSTH is fully operational. That shows that it is possible to depend upon operations that fulfil the roles for which they were established. As a friendly country whose historical ties with Haiti have linked our two countries since the birth of our nation, Colombia believes that it is important to stress the fact that there can be no real stability or sustainable development in Haiti without strengthening democratic institutions.

We underscore that the Mission's primary goal is to help the Haitian Government in strengthening the rule of law, the judicial system and the Haitian National Police, as well as human rights. All of that will contribute to achieving the sustainable development agenda in Haiti. As the police force and the judiciary go hand in hand, it is necessary to bolster the capacity of both sectors so as to strengthen the rule of law and deal with urgent problems in Haiti. We concur with the Secretary-General's report that the entire judicial system, including the prison system, requires meaningful reforms, and it is in such areas that it is especially important to concentrate efforts, with the political will demonstrated by the Government of President Moïse and the support of MINUJUSTH and of the entire international community.

Greater efforts and resources must be accorded to strengthening and training the Haitian National Police so that it can be fully committed to providing national security. In all such endeavours, we reiterate the importance of gender mainstreaming in the work of the Mission in a cross-cutting manner. We note with satisfaction that, as was mentioned earlier, such a spirit was illustrated by the gender makeup of the first class of court clerks and police officers. Colombia will continue to contribute its police, including in training female police officers, as we have done since 2006.

The draft resolution that will extend the mandate of the Mission for one year includes a clear way for assessing progress made on the ground. Colombia welcomes the flexibility shown by the Council to evaluate the Mission's mandate in accordance with the specific needs of the Haitian Government and the general situation of the country.

In conclusion, as of now, Haiti is on board with the United Nations to rethink formulating its primary goals to maintain international peace and security that, we believe, with the Secretary-General's proposal for reform, takes us a step closer in the right direction. The Haitian people and the Council can always count on the support of my country.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8221

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8221st meeting
Wednesday, 4 April 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Meza-Cuadra	(Peru)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Zambrana Torrelio
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 28 March 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/283)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 28 March 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/283)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Thomas Markram, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/283, which contains a letter dated 28 March 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I wish to encourage speakers to deliver brief statements, in accordance with note S/2017/507.

I now give the floor to Mr. Markram.

Mr. Markram: I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, is away on official travel. I am honoured to be able to address the Council in her stead.

Before providing the Council with the latest information on the status of the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), I would first like to recall the tragic anniversary today of the use of chemical weapons — specifically the nerve agent sarin — in Khan Shaykhun. The Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) referred to this attack as an atrocity. The Secretary-General, in speaking of the same, stated that there can be no impunity for such abhorrent acts. Today seems an especially fitting date to reiterate and underscore those views, as well as to remember the victims of the attack.

As per established practice, I met with representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic in advance of these consultations. The Office for Disarmament Affairs has also continued its regular contact with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. In view of the fact that, just over two weeks ago, the Director-General briefed the Council on developments related to the OPCW's work on the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme, my own intervention today will be brief.

Efforts have continued towards the destruction of the two remaining chemical weapons production facilities by the Syrian Arab Republic. The destruction of these facilities, which will be verified by the OPCW, is expected to be completed within two to three months from the start of destruction. The long-awaited and verified destruction of these two facilities is an essential step towards the full implementation of resolution 2118 (2013).

On the outstanding issues related to Syria's declaration, discussions between the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic are continuing. However, these discussions have not permitted the resolution of any of those remaining issues. The OPCW Technical Secretariat continues to be unable to confirm the completeness and accuracy of Syria's declaration. The Secretary-General has repeatedly urged cooperation by the Government of Syria with the OPCW. Resolving these outstanding issues will permit shared confidence in Syria's declaration within the international community.

The OPCW Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic is continuing its work. An Mission team is currently in Damascus, looking into allegations of the use of chemical weapons that were brought to the attention of the Director-General by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. I understand that the next report of the Fact-finding Mission will be submitted when it considers that it has sufficient information and is in a position to draw a conclusion.

However, and as we are all aware, conclusions of the Fact-finding Mission do not entail attribution of responsibility in those cases where the use of chemical weapons is determined. The OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) was created for that purpose, but regrettably its mandate was not

renewed. While allegations of the use of chemical weapons have not stopped, the consideration of a mechanism for accountability has apparently slowed, if not come to a standstill.

The persistent allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria underscore the need to identify solutions and to reach agreement on an appropriate accountability mechanism. The Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs have repeatedly underlined the need to avoid impunity and to ensure that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons are identified and held responsible. Let me take the Organizationpportunity to reiterate that conviction once again. Unity in the Security Council — unity of the kind that gave rise to resolution 2118 (2013), to the OPCW-United Nations joint mission and to the JIM itself — provides the best foundation for success. The Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to assist.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Markram for his informative briefing.

I shall now give the floor to Council members who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): We would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and the delegation of Peru on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. The United States stands ready to support you in every way possible. I thank Mr. Markram for his briefing.

We often talk about chemical weapons. However, I am concerned that we sometimes lose sight of the human side of those attacks. I want to begin by providing some insight into what such attacks are like for the people actually on the ground who experience them. We have two different accounts. This is the first account:

> "Something hit me on the head ... I was dazed, knocked down ... I got several breathes [sic] of the strong solution right from the shell ... My eyes were running water and burning, so was my nose, and I could hardly breathe. I gasped, choked and felt the extreme terror of a man who goes under in the water."

This is the second account:

> "The situation is more desperate than I can describe. There are no words. It was like Judgment Day — the apocalypse. You just cannot even describe the scene. You cannot even begin to scratch the surface of explaining what happened. We did not have any protective equipment for gas."

The first account is from the diary of an American soldier, Stull Holt. He was gassed on the First World War battlefield Verdun, France, in 1917. The second account comes from a doctor named Mamoun Morad. On 4 April 2017, he was one of the only doctors on duty in the small Syrian town of Khan Shaykhun. A hundred years had passed between what Lieutenant Holt and Dr. Morad experienced, but the horror and the terror of experiencing the use of chemical weapons are exactly the same.

Chemical weapons were first used in the First World War. However, over the decades that followed, an international consensus grew. The world saw the unique destructive power of such weapons and rightly turned away in disgust. As early as in 1925, the Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare banned the use of chemical weapons in armed conflict. Decades later, the Chemical Weapons Convention banned their production, stockpiling and use. It was an unambiguous ban. We dared to believe that one day, chemical weapons would be something that we would only read about in history books. We dared to believe that we could banish the threat forever.

Then came Syria. The Al-Assad regime used chemical weapons against its own people. In 2013, the world reacted with horror at the pictures of hundreds of men, women and children dead as a result of the regime's use of sarin on the outskirts of Damascus. Although we disagreed about almost every aspect of the war, we once again found consensus on chemical weapons. Our shared disgust led us to act together. In 2013, we adopted resolution 2118 (2013), which mandated the destruction of the Al-Assad regime's arsenal of chemical weapons. In 2015, we established the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism so that we could identify anyone who used chemical weapons in Syria. The United Nations found definitively that the Al-Assad regime, as well as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, had been responsible for such use.

Once again, we dared to believe that, despite all our differences over Syria, the consensus against the use of chemical weapons by anyone would persist. Of course, we know what happened next. The Al-Assad regime continued to use chemical weapons against the

Syrian people. One member of the Council shielded the Al-Assad regime from any consequences, and then prevented us from renewing the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism. Our consensus broke down.

Today, the world is a far more dangerous place because of that. The Al-Assad regime continues to drop chlorine bombs on innocent men, women and children. In only the past few weeks, when the regime seized eastern Ghouta, there were credible reports of chlorine gas attacks. It is a sad fact that just a few years ago, a single chemical weapons attack would have united us in shock and anger. That would have been enough for us to take immediate action. We now have a regime that uses chemical weapons practically every second week.

Our lack of action has consequences. When we let one regime off the hook, others take notice. The use of nerve agents in Salisbury and in Kuala Lumpur is testament to that point and reveals a dangerous trend. We are rapidly sliding backwards and moving back into a world that we thought we had left. No one wants to live in a world where chemical weapons are used. No one wants to live in fear that a colourless and shapeless gas will suddenly seep into their lungs and leave them gasping for air. If we do not act and do not stop and change the course, that is the world that we could be fast approaching.

Even as the Security Council has remained deadlocked, some have stood up to demand accountability for the use of chemical weapons. The General Assembly overwhelmingly endorsed the establishment of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, which is collecting evidence for future prosecutions. The United States also fully supports the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, initiated by France. Such efforts are vital.

However, we must not forget that, while we sit here debating chemical weapons, there are people on the front lines in Syria who face the terrifying reality of those heinous weapons. Dr. Mamoun Morad, whom I mentioned earlier, is among them. A year ago, he was on duty in Khan Shaykhun, where the Al-Assad regime used sarin gas in an attack that killed nearly 100 people and injured more than 500 others. Dr. Morad is a humanitarian. He saw that his countrymen were in need. He risked everything, including his own life, to help save others.

Dr. Morad is no stranger to working under the toughest circumstances. In 2015, the hospital where he worked was struck by a missile. Nevertheless, he continued to save lives. In 2016, Dr. Morad ran out through the door of a hospital hit by an airstrike only to see the building completely destroyed by another strike moments later. Nevertheless, he continued to save lives. In 2017, a missile struck the entrance of the clinic where he worked. He was hit by debris. Nevertheless, he continued to save lives. On 4 April 2017, just after leaving the town's hospital, Dr. Morad saw the warplanes over Khan Shaykhun. He did what he had always done — he told his driver to turn around and to go back. What Dr. Morad saw was a living hell — one victim of the sarin attack after another kept arriving. He recalled:

> "A boy arrived gasping for breath, with foam coming out of his mouth and with pinpoint pupils. We washed the boy. We washed and we washed and we washed. We gave him what treatment we could, and tried to resuscitate him, but he did not make it."

Even as he felt himself being contaminated by sarin, Dr. Morad did not stop. He was just one person, with almost no staff. The hospital had almost no medicine. Much of what was left had expired years ago. However, Dr. Morad did not stop. He did whatever he could to revive the unconscious and to clean off the toxic chemicals from their bodies before they died. He never ceased trying to save lives. Dr. Morad is a hero. He has made the journey to be with us today. I ask him to stand up.

We salute Dr. Morad for his bravery, courage and determination to help any Syrian who is in need. Dr. Morad is here today to be an inspiration to all of us. He works to save the lives of the Syrian people even after living through missile attacks and air strikes — even after being gassed at Khan Shaykhun. Dr. Morad does not stop; he does not give up. And if he is not going to stop, we must not stop. We must not stop working to rid this world of chemical weapons and holding to account anyone anywhere who uses them.

We have done this before. We have committed to a world without chemical weapons. We have signed the treaties banning them. We have destroyed stockpiles. We have launched truly independent and impartial investigations to know who is responsible for using

them. As Dr. Morad once said, "I do not care about politics". What he wants is for the world to speak out about the suffering of the Syrian people and for us to do our jobs and make the suffering stop. We owe him and the Syrian people that much.

On 4 April 2017, the people of Khan Shaykhun suffered an unspeakable tragedy. On this day, 4 April 2018, let us reflect on this tragedy. Let us remember what Dr. Morad witnessed, and let us use this meeting as the start of a renewed partnership and a renewed commitment to putting an end to the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We have done it before. Even with all of the profound divisions on the Security Council, the United States refuses to believe that we cannot come together once again to stop chemical weapons, not just to protect the Syrian people but to protect us all.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): In honour of Peru's presidency, Mr. President, let me thank you in Spanish: *Muchas gracias, Señor Presidente*. I also extend my warm thanks to the Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Thomas Markram, for his briefing.

This year, we are celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the end of the First World War. The ensuing ban against the use of chemical weapons raised the hope of the world for an end to the horrors of chemical warfare. Sadly, 100 years later, chemical-weapon attacks have been taking place in Syria, reportedly at least 85 times. In that context today, I will make three points: first, Syria's failure to comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention; secondly, the commemoration of the sarin attack at Khan Shaykhun; and thirdly, accountability.

As to my first point, Syria's failure to comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention, this month 21 years ago, the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force. It was the first disarmament agreement to provide for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction under universally applied international control. It was a great achievement.

Almost five years ago, Syria joined the Chemical Weapons Convention. Syria promised to destroy and abandon its chemical weapons programme. Yet, month after month, we hear that the Syrian regime's declaration cannot be considered complete or accurate. Until that declaration is complete, Syria is simply not complying with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. We are deeply concerned — and we remain deeply concerned — about this fact, and we reiterate our call upon the Syrian regime to extend its full and timely cooperation to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague.

As to my second point, the commemoration of the sarin attack at Khan Shaykhun, today we commemorate the horrendous sarin attack by the regime against Khan Shaykhun on 4 April 2017, as Thomas Markram highlighted in his briefing. The conclusions of the United Nations-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), mandated by the Security Council itself, were clear — the Al-Assad regime carried out the heinous 4 April attack, killing approximately 100 innocent Syrian civilians, including many children, and injuring hundreds more. The report also determined that Da'esh was responsible for using the chemical weapon sulfur mustard in attacks on 15 and 16 September 2016 in Um-Housh, Syria.

Sadly, that was not the last time that we received reports that chemical weapons were used in Syria. Dozens of instances are currently being investigated by the OPCW Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic. The use of chemical weapons should never go unpunished. Impunity erodes the important prohibition of the use of chemical weapons.

That brings me to my third point: accountability. All members of the Security Council regularly stress the need for accountability for perpetrators who use chemical weapons. Yet the Security Council has not been able to move forward for months due to the use of veto by a permanent member of the Council. The Joint Investigative Mechanism had a strong mandate to investigate and identify perpetrators independently from the politics in the Council. But the renewal of the JIM's mandate fell victim to exactly those politics. That does not mean we now need to settle for less — all the more so because, since the JIM ceased to operate, we have received reports that the regime has carried out at least five more chemical-weapons attacks, and maybe even more. The disappearance of the JIM cannot be the end of the story.

First, we must act upon the conclusions of the Joint Investigative Mechanism and on the outcomes of the OPCW Fact-finding Mission. I reiterate that a referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court in The Hague by the Security Council is the most appropriate path to accountability and justice.

Secondly, we must intensify our efforts to achieve a mechanism that can continue the meticulous work of the JIM. Such a mechanism should, first, independently decide how it will conduct its investigations. I emphasize that it should do so independently. It should also investigate and identify perpetrators of all parties to the armed conflict. Further, it should operate independently from the Council, including when it comes to the attribution of guilt. The Kingdom of the Netherlands believes that the Security Council should rally around the United States draft text for a new mechanism.

Finally, we also have to consider all instruments outside of the Council to advance accountability for the use of chemical weapons. That effort should build upon the important work of the JIM and the OPCW Fact-finding Mission. We are ready to take the lead in this regard. In this context, we also re-emphasize our strong support for the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Those Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, and the Commission of Inquiry. We also support the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, initiated by France.

In conclusion, there is no middle ground in the Council when it comes to chemical weapons. Ultimately, we must learn the lessons of history and ensure that, 100 years after the end of the First World War, there can be no impunity for the use of chemical weapons. To do otherwise is to effectively condone these appalling attacks and to undermine the international architecture that we collectively designed to stop them. In the words of the Secretary-General, we must begin to repair the damage to the chemical weapons disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands will continue to do its utmost to achieve accountability for the horrific use of chemical weapons in Syria. Impunity cannot prevail.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I thank the Deputy to the High Representative for his briefing.

I would like to start by also saluting Dr. Morad. I thank him for his work, and I thank Ambassador Haley for drawing our attention to his presence in this Chamber today. I also thank all those members of the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and others who try so hard to help the people of Syria.

We have heard very graphic accounts of what exactly sarin is and how it attacks the central nervous system and leads to convulsions, paralysis and asphyxiation. I am sure that none of us will forget the footage we saw of the agony of the men, women and children who were poisoned by this nerve gas. As previous speakers have said, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic concluded that sarin was used in Khan Shaykhun, and the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism concluded that the Syrian regime was responsible for the attack.

Khan Shaykhun was not the first time the regime used chemical weapons. In 2013, after hundreds that were killed with sarin in eastern Ghouta, Russia and the Al-Assad regime promised the world that Syria would abandon all of its chemical weapons. Resolution 2118 (2013) decided that Syria would destroy its chemical weapons programme and join the Chemical Weapons Convention. Last month, the Director-General briefed the Council on Syria's progress in doing just that. The Director-General noted that Syria had destroyed its declared programme very quickly, but that questions had arisen following inspections conducted by the OPCW, and overtime those questions have increased as inspectors have deployed to Syria more than a dozen times.

Chemicals were found that should have been declared, and yet Syria claimed not to know why. After long, drawn-out discussions, they finally declared the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre, but there were still 21 serious issues that remained unaddressed. That means that after more than four years of work, the OPCW is still unable to verify that Syria's declaration is accurate, and as we have heard many times, gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies remain in Syria's account of its declaration under the Chemical Weapons Convention. Those are not trivial points of minor detail; they are substantive, and the seriousness of the outstanding concerns has increased over time.

My United States and Dutch colleagues have eloquently drawn attention to the fact that there can be no impunity, and we echo their call to that end. Last November, Russia blocked the renewal of the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism and that leaves us, as the Dutch Ambassador said, without a proper

mechanism to determine accountability. I echo what he said about the way to explore all avenues in order to try and find a way of establishing accountability and responsibility for such weapons.

It is not just through actions in Syria, unfortunately, that Russia's disdain for the international system manifests itself. The poisoning in Salisbury of two people with a military-grade nerve agent endangered anyone who chanced to be in the vicinity. More than 130 people, including a police officer, were potentially exposed to the agent. There has been no explanation offered as to how a Russian nerve agent came to be used in that manner. On 22 March, a Foreign Ministry official in Moscow rejected the idea that Russia would accept the OPCW independent conclusions in examining material from the Salisbury attack, and today Russia has called a meeting of the Executive Council of OPCW in The Hague to pre-empt the findings of the OPCW investigation.

There should be no more victims of chemical weapons attacks, whether they take place in the war zone of Syria or in an English country town. The rules-based international order and its institutions are too valuable to be put at risk in that way. It is our collective duty to protect them and seek accountability for those who choose to defy them. We fail the people of Syria, the people of Salisbury and the world if we do not act.

Both my Dutch and American colleagues drew attention to the 100 years that have elapsed since some of the worst battles of the First World War. Allow me to conclude with a quote from a poem from that War, "I died in hell — (They called it Passchendaele)". It has a new name now.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I thank the Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Thomas Markram, for his informative briefing. The position of Kazakhstan on the issue remains firm and consistent. The use of chemical weapons is absolutely unacceptable in any circumstances. Strongly condemning such actions, we firmly support the collective efforts of the Council to counteract such flagrant violations, and are determined to prevent them from happening in the future. We would like to share the following observations on the report before us (S/2018/283, annex).

First of all, we are pleased that during the reporting period there some progress was made towards the destruction of the remaining two chemical weapons production facilities. We call on the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the Government of Syria and the United Nations Office for Project Services to accelerate the measures, as long as current circumstances are favourable.

At the same time, we are concerned about the lack of progress in clarifying all outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic. We urge the Government of Syria and the OPCW to cooperate more closely and to maximize interaction in order to resolve all the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies. If some assistance is required from the Council, the parties should request it with practical proposals on how to intensify such cooperation. At the same time, they should outline concrete obstacles that prevent them from achieving the necessary results.

In that regard, the OPCW is supposed to provide full reports on the work of the Declaration Assessment Team. Likewise, we expect it to update us on the work of the Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, especially on studying all allegations on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We note simultaneously that the Council has not yet restored its investigative potential. We hope that the two penholders will make exhaustive attempts to find common ground so as to be able to proceed further.

The last disturbing factor for us is the continued threat of the use of chemical weapons in Syria and the alarming allegations. We have to prevent at all costs such destructive terrorist acts against the innocent Syrian people. Proactive steps are essential, recognizing that such acts undermine all international efforts to achieve a comprehensive solution to the military and political crisis in Syria. The Security Council remains the main organ responsible for preserving peace and security and relentlessly searching for a peaceful solution to crises and conflicts throughout the world. Unilateral military actions, beyond the legitimate decisions of the Security Council, are not an option.

It is extremely important and necessary to overcome all differences among the members of the Council that prevent the complete elimination of the threat of use of chemical weapons in Syria. It is equally vital to remove all impediments to conducting an independent and impartial investigation to identify those responsible for chemical crimes. Kazakhstan is committed to ensuring that the Council works constructively, and encourages the members to prevent the politicization

and polarization of the Council. To do so only militates against a unified response to current challenges and threats.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Peruvian presidency for holding this important meeting and Mr. Thomas Markram for his very insightful briefing. I would also like to welcome Dr. Mamoun Morad to our meeting.

I shall raise three points today on the use of chemical weapons in Syria, its importance with respect to non-proliferation and our collective security, and the imperative of the fight against impunity.

The chemical weapons attack in Khan Shaykhun that took place one year ago to the day marked a new and horrific stage in the plunge into the hell of the Syrian tragedy. On 4 April 2017, with the use of sarin gas, the Syrian regime revealed to the world its determination to crush its opponents and its people by every means possible, and to that end di not hesitate to use the most terrifying weapons of destruction.

One year later, the violence continues in Syria and the Syrian regime has not stopped using chemical weapons, which almost a century ago the international community resolved to ban forever and which the Syrian regime itself had committed not to use. Its responsibility has been established publicly and unambiguously by the mechanisms we created together to determine responsibilities. No attempt to discredit and consign to oblivion the clear conclusions reached by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) can change that reality. No one can claim that they did not know.

I would remind those who seek to refute the responsibility of the Syrian regime that it is not possible at present to confirm that Syria declared all its stocks and capacities in 2013. The ongoing use of chemical weapons in Syria is an indisputable indication that stockpiles of sarin and chlorine indeed exist.

Two things are clear — either Syria lied as it assumed its obligations or it carried out a secret programme in breach of those obligations. Of course, a combination of those two theories cannot be ruled out. Therefore, we can only reiterate our call on the Syrian regime to respond to all of the many unanswered questions. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) inspection teams are rigorous and professional in carrying our their mission and have been commended by all States. We take note of the information provided with regard to the upcoming destruction of Syria's last declared chemical weapons productions facilities and reiterate our full support to the OPCW.

The use of chemical weapons by anyone in any circumstances violates the universal conscience and the most basic norms of international law. Make no mistake — the use of chemical weapons poses a potentially lethal threat to the sustainability of the international chemical non-proliferation regime. That regime is one of the most developed and successful of all the international non-proliferation regimes. Allowing it to fracture without taking action would be tantamount to endorsing the decline of the entire international regime for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which we built together over several decades, step by step, and which is the backbone of the international security architecture and one of the key achievements of multilateralism.

Allowing those who have contributed to the re-emergence of such weapons to go unpunished breaks the taboo surrounding their use and promotes their proliferation. Regrettably, the use of a military-grade neurotoxin on British soil just a month ago confirms that our concerns are warranted. A taboo has been broken in Syria, Salisbury and elsewhere. It poses a direct threat to one of the key tenets of our collective security. It is therefore urgent that we all reaffirm and consolidate the absolute ban of such substances.

If we wish to return to a complete prohibition of chemical weapons, we cannot allow those who use them to go unpunished. If we want to reaffirm and strengthen the taboo against the use of chemical weapons, impunity cannot be a moral or political option. The use of chemical weapons against civilians is a war crime and even a crime against humanity. Those responsible must answer for their actions. The issue of determining responsibility cannot be overlooked.

Evidence has been collected, in particular by the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic, established by the General Assembly and tasked with facilitating investigations into the most serious crimes committed in Syria. Such evidence will be preserved and used in national and international legal

proceedings because, without justice for the victims, there will be no lasting peace in Syria. Justice must be a separate dimension in all political solutions, pursuant to resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). As I have already stated, although the countries in the Astana process meet in Turkey, Geneva is the only forum that can provide a lasting solution to the conflict.

There is a serious risk of undermining the non-proliferation region if we allow impunity to prevail. That is why we will continue to fully engage in all forums to combat impunity for the use of chemical weapons. It is also for that reason that in January France launched the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. This open and pragmatic partnership brings together States that reject impunity for those involved in chemical attacks or in the development of chemical programmes. It unites all States that are concerned that the non-proliferation regime and strategic stability could be undermined. It was established to support the actions of all international investigative mechanisms and forums. It is a global partnership that applies to all instances of the use of chemical weapons throughout the world and by all actors, State and non-State alike. The partnership is open and all States that abide by its principles are invited to join.

Now that the taboo against the use of such weapons has been broken, there is the risk of such weapons falling into the hands of other actors, in particular non-State actors. I recall that the JIM concluded that mustard gas was used twice by Da'esh. States that refused to punish the perpetrators identified by the JIM or to extend its mandate also squandered an opportunity to send a clear message to terrorists. It is up to all States to protect themselves against terrorist groups and their possible access to weapons of mass destruction.

The issue surrounding the use of chemical weapons affects our core values and security. If there is one area in which the members of the Security Council have the moral and political responsibility to work together and take action, it is this. If there is one area in which the credibility of the Council is at stake and where tactics and games have no place, it is this.

This year, as we commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the end of the First World War, in which the use of gas in combat had devastating effects, and remember the tragedy of Khan Shaykun, on behalf of France I make an urgent request that we set aside our political differences and end the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We owe it to the civilians who are the primary victims of such weapons. We also owe it to the future of the international non-proliferation regime for chemical weapons, which is one of the keystones of our collective security.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting and wish you every success in steering the work of the Security Council this month.

We also thank Mr. Thomas Markram, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for his briefing today.

We are meeting to discuss the issue of chemical weapons in Syria, on which all members of the Council firmly agree within the context of the Syrian crisis. Based on this consensus, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) was established to hold accountable the perpetrators of crimes committed with chemical weapons in Syria. The Mechanism was able to determine those responsible for several crimes, including the incident that took place in Khan Shaykhun, whose first anniversary we mark today. Since then, we in the State of Kuwait have demanded an independent and impartial international investigation into the incident. The JIM determined the perpetrators of that and other painful incidents. Nonetheless, the Council was unable to hold any party accountable. Therefore, the justice we hoped for dissipated as a result of divisions among the member States, which prevented the extension of the JIM's mandate.

The State of Kuwait fully supports the work of the United Nations and of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) through its Fact-finding Mission investigating allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We commend the Mission's performance and professionalism and call on the Syrian authorities to cooperate with the OPCW in order to resolve the discrepancies concerning the details of their chemical programme. The provisions of resolution 2118 (2013) are conclusive and decisive regarding the accountability of those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

We cannot accept the current situation, namely, the continued use of chemical weapons in Syria more than four years after the adoption of that resolution. This

means that we have failed the Syrian people, and could not end their suffering from the use of these weapons against them in various Syrian areas. On more than one occasion we have expressed our full backing for any accountability alternatives and mechanisms that would enjoy the consensus of all members of the Council in a manner that would ensure its independence, neutrality and professionalism, while stressing that its responsibility is exclusively to determine who is responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The Security Council would then call to account the perpetrators responsible for committing those crimes, according to the principle of no impunity provided for in resolution 2118 (2013).

We believe that those elements exist in the United States draft resolution being discussed by the members of the Council. We call on all Member States to build upon this draft resolution as a good basis for any negotiations on such a mechanism in the future. Kuwait also supports the French Partnership Initiative and the principles set out therein aimed at holding accountable those responsible for the use of chemical weapons and ensuring that there is no impunity.

We reiterate our full readiness to participate in any effort to achieve consensus in the positions of Security Council Member States so as to ensure that the perpetrators of such internationally prohibited crimes are held accountable and that the non-proliferation regime is preserved. This is based on our principled and firm commitment condemning any use of chemical weapons as a gross violation of international law, while stressing the importance of bringing to international justice the perpetrators of such crimes, whatever they may represent.

In conclusion, we welcome the efforts of the General Assembly and support the work of the impartial and independent International Mechanism in assisting the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the most serious crimes under international law committed in Syria since 2011, including crimes related to the use of chemical weapons. We look forward to the results of its first report in this regard, which will be discussed on 17 April in the General Assembly.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We thank Deputy High Representative Thomas Markram for his briefing. As he noted, it has been a year since the chemical attack in Khan Shaykun claimed the lives of innocent civilians in Syria. We reiterate our strong condemnation of this inhumane attack. I thought that I should tell the Deputy High Representative that the way in which he concluded his statement was very, very appropriate. He is right in stressing how critical the unity of the Council on this matter is and that it is the key to everything.

One year after the barbaric attack in Khan Shaykun, the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria continues unabated, hence this matter remains a source of great concern. We still believe that those responsible for the use of chemicals as weapons must be held accountable based on robust evidence. This requires, as the Secretary-General mentioned in his letter dated 28 March 2018 (S/2018/283), a unified response from the Council. We believe that without unity, the damage to the chemical-weapons disarmament and non-proliferation regime cannot be repaired.

We find it very encouraging indeed that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has continued to make all the arrangements required to support the Syrian Government in destroying the two remaining above-ground facilities, including by agreeing additional amendments to the tripartite agreement concluded among the OPCW, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the Syrian Government. We hope that all these preparations will lead to the elimination of the two remaining facilities.

Regarding the outstanding issues related to the initial declaration, we note that the OPCW remains unable to state that the declaration is accurate and complete. In this connection, we reiterate the importance of continued and more fruitful communication between the OPCW and the Syrian Government, with the ultimate objective of addressing the remaining gaps and inconsistencies. We see no reason why this could not be expedited.

We also note that the Fact-finding Mission has continued its investigation into allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, including by deploying a team in Syria, as mentioned by the Deputy High Representative. It is imperative that the mission's investigation into all allegations continue, including recent reports of the use of chemicals as weapons. However, the Council must address the current institutional gap by creating an independent, impartial and professional investigative mechanism that could identify the actors responsible, both State and non-State. We have no doubt that the issue of an accountability mechanism should be given extremely high priority.

This, as we have said repeatedly, would require unity on the part of the Council. Hence we join in the call made by the Deputy High Representative that the unity of the Council should be restored on this important matter so as to deter and stop the use of chemical weapons in Syria and beyond.

We indeed would recall, as others have already mentioned, that the Council had successfully summoned its collective will in the past to achieve unity with a view to addressing the challenges posed by chemical weapons. There is no reason why this feat cannot be repeated.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Peru for having convened this open meeting and Deputy High Representative Thomas Markram for his briefing.

Since the chemical-weapons attack incident in Syria, China has been deeply concerned, as we strongly condemn any attack against civilians. China's position on the issue of chemical weapons has been consistent: we firmly oppose the use by any country, organization or individual of chemical weapons, under any circumstances.

China supports the carrying out of a comprehensive, objective and impartial investigation into the use of chemical weapons on Syrian territory so as to achieve a result that can pass the litmus test of history and truth, bringing the perpetrators and the parties responsible for the use of chemical weapons to justice.

China is deeply concerned about the recent incidents involving the suspected use of toxic chemicals as weapons. The establishment of a new investigation into the use of chemical weapons in Syria aimed at determining the truth, in a bid to prevent the recurrence of the use of chemical weapons on Syrian territory, is of vital importance; this is also the consensus of all parties in the Security Council. We appreciate Russia's active efforts to promote the establishment of a new investigative mechanism and hope that the members of the Council will be united and continue their constructive consultations on this issue.

All parties concerned should continue to insist that the Security Council and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) be the main channels for dealing with the Syrian chemical-weapon issue in an effort to seek proper solutions through consultations. China welcomes the positive progress made in the OPCW's efforts to destroy the remaining two chemical-weapon facilities in Syria and hopes that the parties concerned will cooperate closely and complete related work as soon as possible. At the same time, China hopes that the Syrian Government will duly continue to maintain its cooperation with the OPCW in order to resolve all relevant issues regard to its initial declaration on its chemical-weapons programme.

The Syrian conflict has entered its eighth year and led to profound suffering for the Syrian people. A political settlement is the only solution to the Syrian issue. The international community should increase its support for United Nations mediation efforts and the work of Special Envoy De Mistura in order to begin the next round of Geneva peace talks as soon as possible and to move forward constructively. China welcomes the summit meeting held by Russia, Turkey and Iran, which China hopes will contribute to advancing the process leading to peace talks in Geneva.

Mr. Zambrana Torrelio (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, we express our gratitude for the briefing by Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Thomas Markram, and to the presidency of Peru for convening this meeting.

We underscore the Syrian Government's cooperation in initiating the last phase of destroying the remaining facilities declared by Syria and verified by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). In that regard, we highlight the most recent meeting held in Beirut this past March, which consisted of representatives of the United Nations Office for Project Services, the OPCW and the Syrian Government, the outcome of which made it possible to agree on new amendments to the tripartite agreement that would facilitate the destruction of the those facilities, which would take two to three months.

We call on the Syrian authorities to continue and expand upon that cooperation by providing the clarifications requested by the Declaration Assessment Team in connection with activities carried out by their Government and the Scientific Studies and Research Centre. We highlight the fact that the second round of inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities, as well as visits others, this past February has shown that their activities were consistent with obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

On the other hand, we reiterate our concern about recent reports of the alleged use of chemical weapons

in Syria. As it has always stated, Bolivia categorically condemns the use of chemical weapons and the use of chemical components as weapons, while considering such use an unjustifiable and criminal act, wherever, whenever and by whomever it is committed. We believe that nothing can justify their use regardless of circumstances and those who use them, as they constitute a grave violation of international law and a threat to international peace and security.

In that regard, we reiterate our firm support for the OPCW and its Fact-finding Mission so that, in line with their mandates, they can continue their investigative work and verify the alleged use of chemical weapons in the most objective, methodical and technical manner possible. We call on all parties to lend their full cooperation so that an effective, transparent and conclusive investigation can be carried out as soon as possible. We must be aware, however, that an investigation of the facts alone is not enough. It is crucial to be able to depend upon a mechanism that enables perpetrators to be identified so that they can then be brought to justice before the appropriate entities.

If it is our goal to establish a new transparent mechanism that enables investigating and identifying the perpetrators of such atrocities, then we confront the challenge and shoulder the responsibility of not politicizing or instrumentalizing the Security Council. We reiterate the need and the utmost importance of demonstrating the Security Council's unified stance on this issue to the international community, and call on the parties involved to discuss and exchange views on the establishment of an independent, impartial and representative mechanism that will allow for a complete, reliable and conclusive investigation.

Bolivia categorically rejects the unilateral imposition of sanctions, as they represent a grave threat to the international order and run contrary to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, thereby jeopardizing the political process and, consequently, peacebuilding in Syria.

Lastly, we emphasize that the only way to settle the conflict is through an inclusive political process, deliberated and led by and for the Syrian people.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): Let me thank Mr. Markram for his briefing this morning.

As other speakers before me have pointed out, today marks the one-year anniversary of the sarin attack in Khan Shaykhun, which the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism has attributed to the Syrian regime. That was a repugnant attac, with a large number of civilian casualties. Today, the failure to agree on a new independent and impartial attributive mechanism for chemical-weapons use in Syria casts a particularly dark shadow over the Security Council.

Sweden condemns in the strongest terms the continued and repeated use of chemical weapons in Syria, which constitutes a serious violation of international law and a threat to international peace and security. The use of chemical weapons in armed conflict is prohibited and is a war crime. The perpetrators of such crimes must be held accountable. Impunity cannot be accepted.

With regard to the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), I reiterate our deep concern that the OPCW is still unable to confirm whether Syria's initial declaration on its chemical-weapons programme is accurate and complete. A number of serious outstanding issues remain. As a matter of fact, the Director-General of the OPCW reported last month that the initial five outstanding questions currently stand at 22. That includes the case of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre, regarding which several questions remain unanswered. We once again call upon the Syrian authorities to fully and proactively cooperate with the OPCW on all outstanding issues. There must be full disclosure and submission of all required documentation without delay.

We share the Secretary-General's alarm about persistent reports of the use of chemical weapons in the conflict in Syria. Those must be followed up by timely and impartial investigations, and we reiterate our full support for the OPCW Fact-finding Mission. But the perpetrators of such attacks must also be identified and held to account. We deeply regret that the Council failed to agree on an extension of the Joint Investigative Mechanism last November (see S/PV.8105). An attributive mechanism is essential to protecting the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime and to ensuring accountability for the repeated use of chemical weapons in Syria. In that regard, I join the representatives of France, Ethiopia and Kazakhstan, among others, in their urgent call for unity. We need to come together in the Council and shoulder our responsibility. We reiterate our call for constructive

engagement by all members, and we remain ready to engage in and contribute to such consultations.

Sweden supports all international efforts to combat the use and proliferation of chemical weapons — by State and non-State actors alike — anywhere in the world. We will continue to do our part to end impunity for the use of chemical weapons. That is why Sweden joined the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons — an initiative taken by France designed to complement and support our collective work in multilateral forums, as well as existing multilateral mechanisms. That is why we will continue to support the Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. And that is why we will continue to pursue efforts to establish a new independent and impartial attributive mechanism for chemical-weapons use in Syria, because, at the end of the day, there can be no sustainable or long-term peace in Syria without accountability for the crimes committed. We owe that to the victims of Khan Shaykhun and elsewhere in Syria.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Côte d'Ivoire thanks Mr. Thomas Markram, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for his useful briefing on the most recent developments on the topic under consideration this morning.

My statement will focus on two points, namely, the elimination of the Syrian chemical-weapons programme and the challenges ahead.

The delegation of Côte d'Ivoire notes the destruction of all Syrian chemical weapons removed from Syrian territory by States parties to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), as well as 25 of the 27 chemical-weapons production facilities declared by the Government of that country. The cooperation efforts between the Syrian Government, the OPCW and the United Nations Office for Project Services, which led to the amendment in Beirut of the tripartite agreement on the destruction of the remaining chemical-weapons production facilites, are to be applauded and encouraged. Such cooperation, which is also reflected in the preparation and regular submission of Syria's monthly reports to the OPCW Executive Council, offers hope for the actual destruction of chemical weapons.

In that regard, Côte d'Ivoire is pleased to have signed, in Paris on 23 January, the declaration of principles issued by the meeting held at the initiative of France on the topic of combating impunity through the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. While it does not replace the long-standing instruments for combating the use of chemical weapons, such an initiative helps to strengthen the existing mechanism. In that context, my delegation would like to thank all States that have contributed to the Trust Fund for Syria Missions, established in November 2015 to support the OPCW and the Fact-finding Mission.

It should be noted that, despite the encouraging progress, major challenges remain. My delegation therefore urges the Syrian authorities to continue their cooperation with the OPCW with a view to an adequate response to outstanding issues, in particular the complete destruction of the remaining chemical-weapons production facilities, the declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding its chemical weapons arsenal, and the activities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre.

Côte d'Ivoire believes that any use of chemical weapons is a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the hard-won international standard that prohibits those weapons. It therefore encourages the OPCW, the Fact-finding Mission and the Syrian Arab Republic to continue their cooperation on eliminating chemical weapons in Syria.

My delegation reiterates its call for a political settlement of the Syrian conflict. We call on the Syrian parties to resume peace talks as part of an inclusive political dialogue, as provided for by resolution 2254 (2015), which sets out a road map for a political process to end the crisis in Syria.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire urges the Council to restore its unity, without which it cannot take positive action with a view to establishing a consensus-based mechanism tasked with attributing responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in Syria, and thereby to end their use in any conflict once and for all.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): Allow me to thank Mr. Thomas Markram, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for his

briefing and for conveying to us the fifty-fourth monthly report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (S/2018/283, annex).

Two weeks ago, we took the opportunity of Mr. Ahmet Üzümcü, Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), being in New York to thank him for the dedicated and tireless efforts of the OPCW to strengthen and to maintain the chemical non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Allow me also to stress that Poland highly values the efforts of the Fact-finding Mission with regard to all its allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

We note with the utmost concern that the OPCW Technical Secretariat remains unable to confirm that the declaration submitted by Syria could be considered as accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemcial Weapons Convention and the decisions of the OPCW Executive Council. Once again, we join the Secretary-General in calling on Syria to extend its fullest cooperation to the Declaration Assessment Team in order to clarify all existing gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies.

Today we observe the first anniversary of the deadly chemical attack on Khan Shaykun, which left dozens of victims dead or wounded. As the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism concluded in its report of 26 October 2017 (see S/2017/904, annex), the information gathered was sufficient to claim that the Syrian Arab Republic was responsible for the release of sarin at Khan Shaykhun on 4 April 2017.

However, the individuals and groups responsible for that and other attacks have not been brought to justice, and the use of chemical weapons has become an almost regular practice in the war being waged in Syria. That is why we must send a clear message that the use of chemical weapons by anyone will not be tolerated. It is yet another reason that we need to ensure that the international community is empowered to address each and every chemical attack and to hold the perpetrators accountable. We call on our partners to engage in a constructive discussion in order to establish an independent, credible and professional investigative mechanism to replace the former Joint Investigative Mechanism. We believe that the draft resolution of the United States is a good basis for further discussion in that regard.

Putting an end to such impunity is a matter not only of justice but also of the credibility of the non-proliferation system and of the security of all of us. Only a month ago, we witnessed another example of the unprecedented use of a chemical agent in Salisbury in the United Kingdom. We hope that the responsibility for that attempt will be established quickly and that the perpetrators of that reckless act will be held accountable as soon as possible.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Republic of Equatorial Guinea appreciates the convening of this meeting. We would like to reiterate our gratitude and appreciation to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, represented here today by Mr. Thomas Markram, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. Unsurprisingly, he has provided us a grim picture of the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

In 2013, in this very Chamber the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2118 (2013), which urges the warring parties in Syria to destroy all chemical-weapons stockpiles in the country. Almost five years have passed, and the debate around this issue is still as old as the conflict itself, which has been going on for eight years.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea, a State party to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and, like all the members of the Security Council, a signatory to the Chemical Weapons Convention, urges the parties involved to be honest in declaring their chemical arsenals. We understand that in the context of prolonged confrontations, the manufacture and use of chemical weapons end up serving a tactical objective, a plan of provocations in which each party's aim is to blame the others. Thus the Syrian opposition and the Islamist groups claim that the Syrian Government is trying to use poisonous gases to suffocate the last rebel bastions, while the Government forces claim that their opponents still have small chemical-weapon workshops that they are using to prepare chemical attacks in the regions we have discussed in order to blame the Government.

The Security Council must put an end to this political game. The use of chemical weapons in Syria clearly poses a threat to international peace and security. We must therefore prevent chemical war in Syria from changing the way we approach conflicts in future. What should the Security Council's coordinated

response to the continued use of chemical weapons in Syria be? The confrontational positions among Council members with the capacity to influence the parties to the conflict show that ending the use of chemical weapons in Syria and the world as a whole depends on reaching an inclusive political agreement. Without a clear international consensus, we run the risk of extending the conflict, with all its direct and collateral consequences.

We know that the Council no longer has an investigative mechanism that can hold violators of the Chemical Weapons Convention in Syria accountable. Nonetheless, my Government continues to insist on the urgent need for the most influential organ of the United Nations to speed up the implementation of a truly independent, professional and impartial investigative instrument. That is the only way to reunite the Council on the issue of chemical weapons in Syria. It is a challenge that goes far beyond Syria. It is about our collective responsibility and moral obligation to the victims of this long conflict.

I would like to conclude by calling on the members of the Security Council to reflect on Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations, which reminds us that one of the powers of the Security Council is

> "to promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources",

and on the words of Secretary-General António Guterres in Geneva on 24 October 2017, when he said,

> "Disarmament can play an important role in ending existing conflicts and preventing the outbreak of new strife. Disarmament and arms control processes provide the breathing space for confidence to be built [and] stability to be strengthened.... This was true during the Cold War and it is true now."

With that, I would like to end by solemnly reaffirming the official position of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, which is to condemn and reject the manufacture, stockpiling, use, distribution and improvement of chemical weapons and other related weapons, whose use can cause only desolation in human lives, and to advocate for their total elimination. We saw the consequences of that use a year ago in Khan Shaykhun, and we therefore take this opportunity to reiterate our unreserved condemnation of that attack.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Since I have not personally had the opportunity to do so yet, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your presidency of the Security Council and to wish you every success with it. We also thank Mr. Markram for his briefing.

In view of the fact that an act of provocation involving the use of a chemical-warfare agent took place in Khan Shaykhun, Syria, on 4 April 2017, exactly one year ago, we believe it will be helpful to analyse the incident and its consequences, including in terms of global and regional security, from the vantage point of today. A year has gone by and yet the circumstances around the chemical incident in Khan Shaykhun remain essentially obscure. Needless to say, the quote-unquote work done by the defunct Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) cannot be taken seriously by professionals. The competent Russian authorities have clearly shown that the Mechanism's conclusions were nothing but an arrangement designed to fit a pre-programmed result — blaming the Syrian authorities. The Fact-finding Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the JIM have demonstrated a rare degree of inertia and incapacity and have been participants in unscrupulous acts of fraud. Basically, the JIM's conclusions were contrary to the laws of physics, the chemistry of toxins, aviation, ballistics and explosive materials.

During the investigation, the standards of the Chemical Weapons Convention were completely ignored. The experts did not visit the place where the incident occurred or comply with the chain-of-custody principle for preserving the physical evidence. They formulated their hypothesis based on information that militias from armed groups had eagerly palmed off on them with the help of outside sponsors and dubious entities linked to terrorists, such as the White Helmets. As I said, the results of the former JIM's investigation have nothing in common with a serious scientific and technical analysis.

Because of this, Russia was unable to support the extension of the mandate of the unchanged Mechanism, especially since its unfounded, politicized conclusions damaged the reputation of a genuine international investigation. Nonetheless, knowing that armed groups in the region, including some affiliated with terrorists, have amassed a considerable toxic-chemical capacity, not only did we not dispute the importance

of designating an independent investigative body, we have proposed a specific alternative to the JIM and circulated a draft resolution to that effect, currently in blue, to Security Council members. We have clearly outlined the main points of our position in the light of the lamentable experience with the JIM. The Secretary-General would select a professional and impartial team for the proposed mechanism on a basis of the broadest possible geographic representation, with the Security Council's approval. The basic procedure would involve visiting the areas where the incidents took place to take samples and interview witnesses, while strictly complying with the chain-of-custody principle in ensuring the preservation of the material evidence.

Based on the critical and objective evidence collected by such a mechanism, the Security Council would be able to attribute responsibility for any incident involving the use of toxic substances. In coordination with the Committees established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015), it would still be important to analyse any information about chemical production by non-State actors and their use in practice of toxic substances, including for purposes of provocation. The authorities in Damascus have repeatedly reported stagings of incidents using professional video equipment and extras provided by the White Helmets. However, that information has either been deliberately ignored or considered a low priority.

In order to avoid structural flaws and continued confrontations regarding the findings of an eventual investigative body, we suggest that its leadership be composed of experts representing the five permanent members of the Security Council, who would make decisions by consensus. We believe that approach would offend no one, since it was precisely owing to disagreements among those countries that the fundamental problems in assessing the situation regarding the use of chemical weapons in Syria arose.

Nevertheless, our Western colleagues are insisting on recreating a mechanism that suits them, with its inherent defects, and which would rubber-stamp the decisions they need. At the same time, they are trying to bring in bodies that in principle have neither the mandate nor the resources for investigating possible chemical incidents. Bypassing the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, France and its allies are forging a narrow group of similarly anti-Damascus-minded people, simultaneously undermining the international architecture for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the authority and integrity of the OPCW. All of that is accompanied by harsh pressure on other States.

We have not forgotten another memorable date. All things being equal, ideally, it should have been the day we held today's meeting. On 7 April 2017, three days after the incident in Khan Shaykhun, before the investigation had even begun, the United States carried out an act of military aggression against Syria, launching missile strikes at the Al-Shayrat airbase. The delegations that were on the Security Council at the time must remember how our American colleagues were expressing their willingness to find mutually acceptable solutions for the modalities of the investigation while the missiles were already flying towards Syria, in a clear demonstration that some capitals have no need of an international investigation in a situation where the goal continues to be getting rid of the legitimate Syrian Government. International law is getting close to collapse when suspicions rather than confirmed facts rule the evidence.

Nor do they want any investigations or mechanisms now, it seems. A number of countries continue to make confident claims about Damascus's use of chemical weapons, despite the obvious absurdity of such statements and the absence of evidence and, most importantly, any military or political reasons for such actions by the Syrian authorities. Russia condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone and supports the Secretary-General's calls for unity in countering this threat — but only the real one, not the imaginary. While some of them are chasing Damascus's phantom chemical weapons, the potential danger of chemical terrorism in the region continues to grow.

Guided by the common principle that the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, is impermissible and should be investigated and punished, that impunity is unacceptable and that the use of such weapons constitutes a threat to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, my Government has instructed me to ask you, Mr. President, to convene an open meeting of the Security Council tomorrow afternoon at 3 p.m., concerning the letter (S/2018/218, annex) from Prime Minister Theresa May of the United Kingdom about the Salisbury incident. The corresponding letter will be sent to you shortly.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

We would like to thank Mr. Thomas Markram, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for his briefing. Peru notes with alarm the repeated reports of the use of chemical weapons against the civilian population in Syria and the absence of a commitment to accountability. Those are heinous crimes, committed in open defiance of the non-proliferation regime and a serious threat to international peace and security, which the Council cannot allow.

In our view, the destruction of the last two declared chemical-weapons production facilities in Syria is an important step. We welcome the meeting held in Beirut by representatives of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the United Nations Office for Project Services and the Syrian Government, which will contribute to that end. However, we are concerned to see, once again, the continuing discrepancies in the Syrian Government's declaration, more than four years after its accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention. We must urge the Syrian authorities to provide all the information required, without further delay.

We would also like to reiterate our support for the professional and objective work of the OPCW Fact-finding Mission and pay tribute to its staff. We stress that its work must be complemented by an independent mechanism that, within the framework of due process, allows for the attribution of responsibilities in this case, in line with international law and international humanitarian law.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I would like to remind all speakers to keep their statements within the time limits provided for in the note by the President of Security Council (S/2017/507).

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Mounzer (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month.

Syria has fulfilled its commitments under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). Syria has always cooperated fully and objectively, as well as in a positive, transparent and flexible manner, in the fulfilment of its commitments, despite great challenges and the complicated, difficult and provocative security situation resulting from the hostile conduct of some regional and international parties. The Syrian Government has realized an unprecedented achievement in the history of the Organization by eliminating forever the Syrian chemical-weapons programme in record time. The elimination was confirmed by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Mission in its report (see S/2014/444) submitted to the Council in June 2014.

However, unfortunately, instead of commending the efforts of the Syrian Government, some members of the Council — and I mean the United States, which has not destroyed its huge chemical arsenal and makes one excuse after another to avoid doing so, in addition to the United Kingdom and France — have mastered the art of deception and misinformation in order to dominate the world and return to the time of colonization and trusteeship.

Those States continue to exploit the Council to make false and baseless accusations against the Syrian Government. Furthermore, they are inventing new meeting formats at the Council, with the aim of achieving one clear goal, namely, to obstruct any progress by the Syrian army against the terrorist groups supported by those same States. They aim to tarnish the image of the Syrian Government and blackmail it politically. The best proof of what I say is the theatrics staged by the White Helmets, the propaganda wing of the Al-Nusra Front. They claimed that toxic chemicals were used in eastern Ghouta. Such claims have coincided with the successful liberation of that area from armed terrorist groups by the Syrian army and its allies, and were proved to be false.

In a dangerous precedent being set, we have heard statements by high-ranking officials of the States I mentioned, who said that the only way for those groups to be saved is through the use of chemical weapons in Syria. It is as though such officials tell terrorist groups to use chemical weapons against civilians, fabricate evidence, use fake witnesses and manipulate crime scenes, as they did previously, and such officials would provide those groups with media coverage and political support, and intervene to save them and then accuse the Syrian Government. That is what those States tell the

terrorist groups to do. Such theatrics are staged not only by the White Helmets; they are also staged here in the Council as part two of the Khan Shaykhun play directed by a permanent member of the Security Council.

Some members of the Council are in unprecedented denial although the majority of the members of this international organization agree that the conclusions of the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) against the Syrian Government pertaining to Khan Shaykhun incident are false and unfounded. That did not prevent some States from repeating lies and unfounded accusations against my country. I would like to remind the Council that the JIM refused to visit Khan Shaykhun. It decided instead to rely on statements made by the criminals who perpetrated this immoral incident in Khan Shaykhun and on fake witnesses, presented and introduced by terrorists to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Joint Investigative Mechanism. The JIM also relied on so-called open sources, which proves that the comical investigation lacked minimum credibility and transparency.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has repeatedly underscored before the Council and the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons that it condemns any use of chemical weapons or any other kind of weapons of mass destruction, which constitutes a crime against humanity and is an objectionable and immoral act that cannot be justified under any circumstances for any reason and regardless of where it takes place. We again stress that the Syrian army did not use any chemical weapons. It no longer possesses such weapons. In fact, the Syrian army itself and civilians have been the target of chemical weapons and toxins, including chlorine, used by armed terrorist groups. Such groups include the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, the Al-Nusra Front and associated entities. They have used chemical weapons in other places in Syria in terrorist crimes they committed in the country and the wider region. We have sent the Security Council and its specialized agencies more than 130 letters, with details about the possession, production and use of toxic chemicals by armed terrorist groups. Regrettably, the Syrian Government did not receive a response, not even one word on measures that the Council took against States that have helped terrorists to gain access to and use such weapons.

It is also deplorable that the Governments of some States have claimed to defend peoples and laws, while their political and colonial history is full of violations against them. How can the United States, the United Kingdom and France claim to be committed to justice when their track record is full of shameful attacks against people and wreaking annihilation in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen and Africa and, before that, in Viet Nam, Cambodia, Cuba, Nicaragua, Grenada and many other States? With regard to the martyred city of Raqqa, an assessment mission conducted by the United Nations visited the city a few days ago and found that it has been completely destroyed by the attacks of the United States-led coalition against Raqqa and other parts of Syria. What credibility is it they talk about before the Council?

I would also like to refer to the so-called French initiative — the International Partnership against Impunity for Use of Chemical Weapons. It is an attempt to sidestep legitimate international mechanisms and to establish a politicized, parallel mechanism in order to serve the agendas of States that wish to accuse the Syrian Government at all costs. The partnership does not aim to prevent impunity, but rather to protect the real perpetrators who use chemical weapons.

Finally, the Syrian Government underscores that it is committed to implementing all the obligations it assumed when it joined the Chemical Weapons Convention, and will continue its war against terrorism regardless of any political or media blackmail and cheap exploitation of the blood of innocent people in Syria.

In conclusion, I would like to pose a question to the representative of the Netherlands. Why has the Netherlands not provided information so far about the chemical agents and technology found on the plane that crashed in Amsterdam in 1992? The explosion led to a giant orange glow, smoke and strange odour. Why has the Netherlands not provided information thus far on those chemical agents?

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.8222

Security Council

Distr.: General
5 April 2018

Original: English

Official communiqué of the 8222nd (closed) meeting of the Security Council

Held in private at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 5 April 2018, at 10 a.m.

In accordance with rule 55 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the following communiqué was issued through the Secretary-General in place of a verbatim record:

"On 5 April 2018, the Security Council, pursuant to annex II, sections A and B of resolution 1353 (2001), held its 8222nd meeting in private with the troop- and police-contributing countries to the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara.

"The President invited Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in the meeting in accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

"The Security Council and the troop- and police-contributing countries heard a briefing by Ms. Keita.

"Members of the Council, Ms. Keita and representatives of participating contributing countries had an exchange of views."

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United Nations S/PV.8223

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8223rd meeting
Thursday, 5 April 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Meza-Cuadra	(Peru)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

The situation in Burundi

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

18-09632 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Burundi

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Council has before it the text of a statement by the President on behalf of the Council on the subject of today's meeting. I thank Council members for their valuable contributions to this statement. In accordance with the understanding reached among the members of the Council, I shall take it that the members of the Security Council agree to the statement, which will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2018/7.

The meeting rose at 3.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8224

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8224th meeting
Thursday, 5 April 2018, 3.10 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Meza-Cuadra	(Peru)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Ms. Eckels-Currie

Agenda

Letter dated 13 March 2018 from the Charge d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/218)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

18-09638 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 13 March 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/218)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): On 14 March, the Security Council held an open meeting (see S/PV.8203) on a letter from the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Theresa May (S/2018/218, annex). It accused Russia, in monstrous and completely unfounded terms, of using chemical weapons on British territory. The representatives of the United Kingdom then promised to brief the Council regularly on the course of the investigation. But there have been no briefings. Well, never mind. We will brief the Council ourselves, in detail.

It is a month today since the Russian citizens Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia Skripal were found unconscious in the city of Salisbury. If a chemical weapon was indeed used, that constitutes a threat to non-proliferation, and that is a matter that merits the Security Council's consideration, not to mention the fact that we have something to say about it and some questions for our British colleagues.

So, what do we know about the crime and its victims? In 2006, Sergei Skripal was convicted of spying for Britain. He has been living there since being amnestied, in 2010, while retaining his Russian citizenship. From time to time he has been visited by his daughter Yulia, also a Russian national. According to the United Kingdom's version of the story, Russia had not forgiven him for his treachery and decided to liquidate him, although he clearly presented no threat of any kind to Russia. We have a number of questions about that.

First, taking a cynical approach, why wait eight years and then do this two weeks before the presidential elections and just a few months before the start of the World Cup? Why was he even allowed out of the country? Why get rid of him in such a strange and public way that was so dangerous to both the perpetrators and bystanders? Anyone familiar with detective stories such as the popular television show *Midsomer Murders*, now in its twentieth season, knows there are hundreds of relatively uncomplicated ways to cleverly do someone in. And yet apparently whoever attacked Sergei Skripal and his daughter chose an intensely poisonous chemical substance — in other words, the riskiest and most dangerous method possible. Nor did they even manage to finish the job. Everyone who was affected is apparently still alive, and Yulia, thank heaven, is rapidly recovering.

This murky business raises a great many questions, and the further into it we go, the more there are. From the very beginning, the British, represented by such well-known experts in chemistry as Prime Minister Theresa May and Foreign Minister Boris Johnson, stated unequivocally that the Skripal incident involved the use of some kind of toxic substance known as novichok and that it was highly likely that the substance originated in Russia. If this super-powerful substance had been released in Skripal's house or on the doorknob — and that appears to be the direction of the investigation — how could Sergei and Yulia have remained in a normal state for several hours afterwards, while Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey, the first person to come to their aid, lost consciousness right away? How could they all have survived this at all? The only possible explanation is that they all received an antidote almost immediately. In the experts' unanimous opinions, in order to do that, a sample of an identical substance, not just a similar one, would have had to be somewhere to hand.

The British research centre at Porton Down, known for its work on chemical weapons, is a few kilometres from the site of the attempt. We have quite a few questions about its activities too. But alas, on Tuesday, Gary Aitkenhead, the chief executive of the laboratory at Porton Down, stated that his laboratory had established that it was "a military-grade nerve agent [but] we have not verified the precise source". He also said that the Skripals had not received any antidotes. He assumed that the British Government, unlike him, might have some additional information. To give Mr. Aitkenhead his due, he did not sacrifice his professional reputation in the service of the conjectures of the British authorities. However, he also affirmed

that nothing like this would ever leave the four walls of his facility. The question is, what does he mean by "this"? What could not leave his laboratory's walls? And does the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) know about it? Whatever the answer, as far as we are concerned, all of this means that the main argument of the British — that the substance was undoubtedly of Russian origin, which is the basis for the entire body of the so-called evidence that Russia's involvement was highly likely — has disintegrated. But Mr. Aitkenhead's statement only makes the case we are considering more mysterious.

Once again, we want to explain to all and sundry that "novichok" is not a Russian copyright, despite its seemingly clearly Russian name. It was invented in the West for a line of chemical warfare agents that were developed in many countries, including the United States and Great Britain, something that will come as no surprise to experts and scientists in the field. Boris Johnson, in answer to a direct question from a Deutsche Welle correspondent, confirmed, also directly, that Britain has a sample of it at Porton Down. Yesterday, a tweet saying that the substance was definitely produced in Russia, which has already resulted in recriminations and false rumours, was deleted from the British Foreign office's website. But like Chip 'n' Dale, the British intelligence services hastened to the aid of Boris Johnson and the Foreign Office, reporting yesterday, via the newspaper *The Times*, that with the help of scientific analysis and investigation they had succeeded in establishing the probable source of the toxic substance's origins only a few days after the chemical attack in Salisbury. They stated that the Cabinet knew on 7 March that the toxin had very likely been produced in Russia. The British intelligence services believe that they have located a secret Russian laboratory where the nerve agent was produced. But wait. There is more. The article says that the British intelligence services' sources cannot confirm the laboratory's location absolutely unequivocally, although their degree of certainty about it is very high. They also believe that the Russians conducted tests to determine whether a novichok could be used for political killings. And there is more. Yesterday the *Daily Mail* also suddenly revealed that British intelligence had top-secret information from certain sources to the effect that before the attack in Salisbury, Russia had been testing a novichok nerve agent on everyday objects such as door handles. I do not even know what to say about this. It is a sort of theatre of the absurd. Could they not have come up with a more realistic fake story? Although we all know the price of British intelligence information, thanks to Tony Blair. We have told our British colleagues that they are playing with fire and that they will be sorry, because it is one thing to make totally unfounded accusations but quite another to move the conversation to a professional level, which requires clear answers to substantive questions, not diplomacy by megaphone.

I do not think that Britain's investigative authorities will thank their Government for its hasty and unequivocal conclusions. Needless to say, their politicians had not considered this. They had no idea that their sensational statements might boomerang back at them. They went all in on that convenient and timely anti-Russian canard — Russian chemical attacks — without realizing that once the dust had settled they would have to answer for their words. Meanwhile, London has begun poisoning our relations with foreign countries. In a sign of solidarity, 150 Russian diplomats have been expelled from a number of States that are allies of the United Kingdom. We know that all over the world its Ambassadors are twisting sovereign States' arms and forcing them to follow their bad example, unleashing a wave that reached as far as New York. In an unprecedented move, its allies in the United States have expelled 60 Russian diplomats, including 12 staff members of the Permanent Mission of Russia to the United Nations, without offering any proof or consulting with us as provided for in the Headquarters Agreement, and thereby acting with blatant disregard for their obligations as a host country of the United Nations.

Incidentally, this is sadly not the first time that the United States has failed to live up to its obligations. It has seized Russian diplomatic property, including property belonging to Russia here at the Permanent Mission in New York, established a 25-mile-radius travel restriction for our diplomats and refused to renew or issue United States visas. We urge the United States to take a responsible attitude to its duties as host country, return everything that it has taken from us illegally and refrain from such actions in future.

We are witnessing shocking events. At our previous meeting on 14 March I discussed this new approach to the legal system — unproven accusations made simply on the basis of suspicion. But there is something else that is no less astonishing. When I look at these British politicians' debates, interviews and statements, I am dumbfounded. O tempora! O mores! What has happened

to good old England? Is it a lack of professionalism, or a debased political culture? Or is it an entirely new political culture? I do not know. I suggest that those present draw their own conclusions.

The British authorities have been trying to ridicule Russia over the 30 or so versions of these events that have been suggested. Notice that these are not versions from the Russian authorities but the opinions of experts and journalists. Yes, there are a lot of versions because the lack of facts and evidence, but everyone in Russia wants to get to the bottom of this murky story. The British authorities, however, have very few versions — just one, in fact, which they are passing off as a final verdict. And yet they cannot identify the source of the poisoning. Is it Skripal's house? His doorknob? Flowers? Buckwheat? Laurel leaves? We have to admit that those citizens and experts, both British and otherwise, who are capable of thought have also come up with various different versions, and a great many questions to which there have been no answers. Here are just a few of them.

Where were the Skripals for four hours with their phones switched off? How were the samples taken? Who can confirm their reliability? Why were relatives not asked for their assent to the taking of blood samples? How was the antidote to an unknown chemical substance obtained so quickly, and was it given to the Skripals? What was Skripal doing? Who were his connections? Where did he travel to? Who did he spend time with? Did they meet with anyone that day or the day before? Where is the data from video surveillance cameras? How do the rushed accusations dovetail with the statements from Scotland Yard that the investigation would take weeks or even months of work? Why is Russia not being given consular access to Russian citizens who may have been the victims of a terrorist act committed on British territory? The British authorities decided, thoughtlessly, that they could get away with their unproven insinuations. Believe me, friends, this story and its investigation are not over. They have not even begun.

On 12 March, we sent the Foreign Office a note requesting access to the data in the investigation, including samples of the chemical substance that the British investigation referred to, so that our experts could examine it as part of a joint investigation. We were thereby complying with the second paragraph of article IX of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which provides that States parties should settle through the exchange of information and bilateral consultations any matter that could cause doubt about compliance with the Convention. Based on the article's provisions, Russia would have been ready to respond to a request from Great Britain within 10 days. Instead of all of that, London issued an absurd, 24-hour ultimatum, which, needless to say, we rejected, since no one, under any circumstances, is permitted to take that tone with Russia. In the ultimatum, which Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson delivered to Russia's Ambassador in London in person,

(*spoke in English*)

> "The Foreign Secretary made clear ... that there are only two possible scenarios. Either the Russian State has attempted murder on British soil using a chemical weapon or Russia has lost control of its stockpile of nerve agents. The Foreign Secretary asked the Russian Ambassador to explain which of the two possibilities was true and to account for how this Russian-produced nerve agent could have been deployed in Salisbury."

(*spoke in Russian*)

We were given 24 hours. That was the sum total of the questions the British asked us. There were no others. They look even more ridiculous given the current situation and the additional information and statements that have since emerged.

On 14 March, Mrs. May sent Mr. Ahmet Üzümcü, Director-General of the OPCW, a request for an independent analysis of the results of the British investigation of the incident in Salisbury. However, our British colleagues are forgetting that when they act in the framework of the OPCW, which we believe is the only correct way to proceed, they have obligations as well as rights, including towards us, as a full member of the OPCW. We reminded them unambiguously about that during the extraordinary meeting of the OPCW Executive Council that was convened yesterday at our request. We proposed a draft decision on a joint investigation. It was blocked by the United Kingdom and its allies, which they hastened to call a victory, despite the fact that the combined total of those voting in favour and abstaining exceeded the number of those voting against. This is understandable. Why would Britain need a joint investigation when it had already established who was guilty before the investigation began? After all, such an investigation might ruin their carefully crafted version based on such powerfully

worded arguments as "highly likely", "overwhelmingly likely", "highly plausible", "there is almost no doubt", "there is no other plausible explanation", "Russia was almost certainly to blame", "high likelihood of Russian responsibility" and "Russia is the likely perpetrator".

Boris Johnson continues to try to persuade everyone that Britain supposedly sent Russia a list of questions to which it has so far received no answers. The complete opposite is true. As I have said, we never received any list of questions. I would now like to ask the British to list those questions, if there are any. Just do not claim that accusations in the form of an ultimatum and a demand that we admit guilt for the deed are questions.

We, on the other hand, have a lot of questions, for London, the OPCW and France, which — based on what provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention is unclear — has suddenly rushed to help the British confirm the results of its so-called fast-track investigation. When we asked about this, the French informed us that Britain had given them detailed information about the investigation. As long as London refuses to provide us with this information, maybe Paris could share it with us? Today we circulated a memorandum for members' perusal. We will also circulate some comments by an official representative of Russia's Foreign Ministry with some fascinating information that I think the Council will find very interesting. We will also send the text of this statement to Council members, with a translation.

The intellectual level of the basis for the accusations and the quest to discover Russia's motives is pitiful. Boris Johnson, who constantly claims to be a Russophile, has made the absurd and amoral suggestion — and "absurd" is the kindest way of putting it — that Moscow needed an incident like this in order to unite the people before the elections. Just as amoral is his comparison of Russia's holding of the World Cup football championship with the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, in which, incidentally, a British delegation participated, including with high-level officials, unlike the Soviet Union.

Boris Johnson has alluded to Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment*, in which he claims that the whole plot turns on whether the criminal will confess or be caught. It is not really about that at all. It is not a detective story, as the British Foreign Minister clearly thinks, but rather a deeply philosophical work of literature. By the way, we have already cited the English proverb in the novel that says you cannot make a horse from a hundred rabbits. Incidentally, I would advise Mr. Johnson to read Dostoevsky's other novels, or at least get to know their names. I am not going to recite them myself.

As a reasoned proof of the evidence for Russia's guilt, the British Ambassador to Moscow gave his colleagues a slide show of six pages, including the title page. These are comic strips passing themselves off as evidence. Once again they say nothing but "highly likely". One must assume that this is the same incontrovertible document that Mrs. May showed to her European Union colleagues, many of whom — to be fair, not all — accepted it as reliable evidence of Russia's guilt. Look at this travesty. We will circulate it. Using these six little squares as the basis for an argument is an insult to intelligence. How can one respect people who are convinced by this kind of thing? This thing. And do those who are doing the convincing not understand that they are being zombified, that they are participants in a collective psychosis?

Boris Johnson's revelation about the so-called dead cat on the table as simply a manoeuvre for diverting attention from other problems — and anyone who does not know what I am talking about can read his interview — is the clearest possible example of the no-holds-barred propaganda war that Britain is waging against Russia. By the way, on the subject of dead cats, according to Sergei Skripal's niece Viktoria, his household in Salisbury — supposedly contaminated by the poison — included two cats and two guinea pigs. Where are they now? What about the animals? Why has no one said anything about them? After all, their condition is also important evidence.

We are living in an era of the collective blurring of intellectual reason. I do not know what psychotropic substances are being used to turn the public into zombies, except for one — the media. It is a terrible weapon of our times. It is easy to use the media to manipulate human minds, and we can see that the Western media is very good at that. However, no intellectually sophisticated schemes are necessary. It is enough, in signalling to a basic instinct, to regularly and purposefully repeat the same unproven lie, gradually drilling it into people's consciousness and eventually presenting it as truth. It is Dr. Goebbels's method — repeat a lie a thousand times and it becomes the truth. We will seek answers to the questions we have posed. And if the answers are not provided, if there is no response, we will regard

that as an admission of the slander that has been made against us with no thought for the consequences. We will seek full cooperation on the Skripal case, and if that is refused, we will consider it an attempt to cover up the truth.

Everything that has happened leads us to believe what has basically been clear from the very beginning. This is a coordinated campaign, carefully prepared ahead of time. It is not accidental. The main goal is clear — discrediting and even delegitimizing Russia; accusing it of using terrible, inhumane weapons; concealing stockpiles in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention; calling into question our role in resolving not just the situation in Syria, for instance, but anywhere at all; and calling into question the very principle of Russia's political legitimacy, while discrediting our position on the Syrian chemical issue. Basically, killing two birds with one stone.

Since the British authorities, without a moment's pause, have the audacity to say that it is "highly likely" that Russia was responsible for the incident in Salisbury, we also suggest that it is "highly likely" that the intelligence services of certain countries are behind this massive provocation. Russia, which has absolutely nothing to do with the poisoning of the Skripals, is more interested than anyone in establishing the truth. We will work to find out the truth based on the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. If the British continue to operate based on suspicions passed off as evidence, if they continue to rely on assumptions based on conjecture rather than facts, they will confirm our much more than highly likely hypothesis that all this murky business, or rather fiction, is a gross provocation.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

We can see that the only way to obtain an objective picture is by strictly adhering to the mechanisms of the Chemical Weapons Convention and collaborating on the investigation. We are also waiting for answers to our obvious questions from the British criminal investigation. We demand consular access to Yulia Skripal.

To sum up, this is what is going on. There has been no confirmation that the substance originated in Russia. We have already stated that we were not involved. But the demands that we admit our guilt are still being made. The British refuse to cooperate with us, on the pretext that victims cannot cooperate with criminals. I beg their pardon. Their categorization of us as criminals, without facts, evidence, a trial or an investigation is null and void. Meanwhile, a crime — possibly a terrorist act — has been committed on British soil against Russian citizens. And it is they who are the victims. That is why we are entitled to demand cooperation and the British are obliged to provide it. By the way, it was funny that at yesterday's meeting of the OPCW Executive Council, some of the United Kingdom's allies called on us to cooperate with the British. Evidently there had not been enough time to brief them on the correct way to proceed.

We have prepared a very simple draft press statement by the Security Council. It will be a truth-telling litmus test for the United Kingdom and its allies. If they bury it, as they did the last time, or turn its meaning on its head, it will be yet another confirmation and proof of their unscrupulous game.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): We did not seek this meeting, but we take requests from the Council for meetings very seriously. I am pleased to be able to update the Council on some developments, but I am also pleased to be able to provide the intellectual clarity that our Russian colleague has called for. In my statement, I will stick to the facts. Following Sergei and Yulia Skripal's poisoning in Salisbury on 4 March, the United Kingdom has launched one of the most comprehensive and complex investigations ever conducted of the use of a chemical weapon. It involves more than 250 police detectives, who are supported by a range of specialist experts and partners. They are trawling through more than 5,000 hours of closed-circuit television footage. They are examining more than 1,300 seized exhibits and interviewing more than 500 witnesses.

In the United Kingdom, the police are independent of the Government, but if there are more details that we can share with the Council as the investigation proceeds, we will be very happy to do so. We all know why that investigation is under way. It is because a military-grade nerve agent was used in an attempt to kill civilians on British soil. It was carried out recklessly and without regard for public safety. It was a weapon of mass destruction. A British police officer was in critical condition alongside the Skripals, and ordinary members of the public, going about their daily business, were put at risk.

I am glad not only to be able to inform the Council that Yulia Skripal is able to communicate and is getting better, but also to clarify what the Russian Ambassador

said about consular access. We have received a request from the Russian Consulate that we have conveyed to Yulia Skripal, and we are awaiting her response. That is an obligation under international law that the British Government takes very seriously, but there is also the question of Ms. Skripal's own wishes, which have to be taken into account.

The Russian Ambassador had several points to make about the United Kingdom's demands of Russia. As he outlined, on 12 March we asked the Russian Government a very clear question. Russia refused to respond and said that it considered the request null and void. It was indeed true that we asked for a response within 24 hours to the question of how a Russian-developed military-grade nerve agent came to be used on the streets of Salisbury and if it meant that Russia had lost control of its chemical-weapons stocks. We stated that Russia should declare its Novichok programme to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We gave 24 hours because it is a weapon of mass destruction. It was no ordinary poisoning and no ordinary attack. In our view, the circumstances justified that tight deadline. Notwithstanding, the Russians stated that the request was null and void. They did not request more time. They did not come to us and say that they wanted to look into it with us. They rejected the very premise of the request.

As the Russian Ambassador stated, we have said that it is highly likely that Russia carried out the assassination attempt. The British Government came to that conclusion because of positive identification by experts at Porton Down that the specific chemical used is a type of Novichok nerve agent. Porton Down is an accredited laboratory under and conforms to the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is allowed to conduct protective research.

The second reason that helped us come to our conclusion was the knowledge that Russia has produced that nerve agent within the past 10 years and remains capable of doing so. As the Prime Minister made clear in the British Parliament, we know that the Russian State has investigated ways of assassination through the use of nerve agents. The third reason is Russia's record of conducting State-sponsored assassinations. I do not want to detain the Council by going through a long list but I can provide examples if anyone would like to hear them. We also made our own assessment that Russia views defectors as suitable targets for assassination and, indeed, there are public statements from Russian leaders to that effect.

I would like to say a word about the use of the phrase "highly likely". We use it because under the British system, only a court can finally determine culpability. Therefore, the use of the phrase "highly likely" is a reflection of our judicial process and should not be construed as casting any doubt whatsoever on the likelihood of Russia being responsible.

I would also like to take this opportunity to address the Russian Ambassador's comment about Porton Down contradicting Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson. There was no contradiction. The Foreign Secretary was making clear that Porton Down was sure that the nerve agent was a Novichok — a point that it has subsequently reinforced. In the same interview, based on that information, additional intelligence and, as I said, the lack of an alternative explanation from the Russians, he goes on to make clear why we have reached the conclusion we have. What the Foreign Secretary said then and what Porton Down has said recently is fully consistent with what we have said throughout. In contrast, we have had innumerable theories from the Russians. I think we have counted some 24 in all. On 21 March, for example, the Russian Foreign Ministry stated that it believed terrorists were to blame. On 14 March, Mr. Lavrov said that the British response was aimed at distracting from Brexit. The use of chemical weapons on any country's territory is far too serious for those theories to hold water.

The Chemical Weapons Convention, which came into force 21 years ago, is clear in article VII that States should adopt legislation criminalizing activity prohibited under the Convention. That is why the United Kingdom is conducting a full investigation into the incident, including under our own Chemical Weapons Act. Because of it, in addition to the United Kingdom's criminal investigation, we have invited the OPCW — the relevant international body — to assist in verifying our analysis on the basis of article VIII of the Chemical Weapons Convention. It mandates the Technical Secretariat to provide technical assistance and technical evaluation to States parties.

Everything we have done has been consistent with the Chemical Weapons Convention and, if I may say so, I will not take any lectures on morality or review our responsibilities under such international conventions from a country that, as the Council debated yesterday

(see S/PV.8221), has done so much to block the proper investigation of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The United Kingdom's track record on that issue speaks for itself.

On 21 March, the OPCW deployed a team to the United Kingdom to visit the locations where the victims were exposed to a toxic chemical. The Director-General briefed the OPCW Executive Council yesterday on its actions. OPCW expert staff collected environmental samples from the scene and biomedical samples from the victims. The OPCW has verified the chain of custody. The samples have been sent to several designated laboratories for testing. The analysis from those laboratories will now be returned to the OPCW and they will produce a report. Contrary to Russian claims, the United Kingdom looks forward to sharing its findings once we have received that report.

Yesterday, Russia put forward a draft resolution at the Executive Council, proposing a joint investigation. There are several ways to view that investigation. I think the metaphor that I find most apt is that of an arsonist turned firefighter but, in this particular instance, the arsonist wishes to investigate his own fire. Having failed to obtain a joint investigation, the draft resolution received only 6 out of 41 votes in favour and, without waiting for the outcome of OPCW testing, Russia has reverted to a familiar path of undermining the international institution involved.

There is no construction we can place on Mr. Lavrov's remarks today other than that Russia will accept the results of the OPCW Salisbury poisoning investigation only if Russian experts participate in it. I am sorry but that does not make it an independent investigation. If Russia insists on having its own experts, it seeks to move away from the Chemical Weapons Convention's stipulation and it sets a test that no independent investigation could credibly tolerate. Regrettably, it is part of a wider pattern of irresponsible Russian behaviour. Russia discredited the work of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigation Mechanism on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Members of the Council will be familiar with a pattern of aggression over the years in Georgia and Crimea. Flight MH-17 was shot down and there was a bungled attempt at a coup in Montenegro. Each time, such acts are accompanied by distortion and disinformation — the same sort of distortion and disinformation we saw yesterday in The Hague, in the Russian press conferences and in the Security Council today.

While we ourselves would not have called today's meeting, we hope to be able to brief the Council further once we have received the report from the OPCW. We believe that it is right that the Security Council remain seized of the flagrant use of chemical weapons. It is such use that threatens international peace and security. The threats to the Chemical Weapons Convention from attacks in Syria, Malaysia and now the United Kingdom pose a very serious challenge to the non-proliferation regime that the Council and others have carefully constructed in response to the terrible events of the past.

There is one country among us — Russia — that plays fast and loose with our collective security and the international institutions that protect us. It it is that reason that leads people to accuse Russia and take steps against it. It is not out of lack of friendship for the Russian people or lack of respect for Russia as a country. My own Foreign Secretary visited in the hope of establishing a more productive relationship with Foreign Minister Lavrov. But we cannot ignore what has happened in Salisbury. We cannot ignore Russia's turning a blind eye to the use of chemical weapons in Syria and in Salisbury, and we cannot ignore the way that Russia seeks to undermine the international institutions that have kept us safe since the end of the Second World War.

We believe that the actions of the United Kingdom stand up to any scrutiny. We have acted in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention throughout and, through the body charged for these purposes, the OPCW, we are happy to come to the Council at any time. We would be very willing to hold an open briefing at our mission here in New York if there are members of the United Nations who still have questions. We have nothing to hide, but I do fear that Russia might have something to fear.

Ms. Eckels-Currie (United States): Yesterday, the Council met on the tragic anniversary of the use of sarin gas in Khan Shaykhun, Syria (see S/PV.8221). Ambassador Haley urged us to use the meeting as the start of a renewed partnership and a renewed commitment to addressing chemical weapons. That is because, as she said, no one wants to live in a world where chemical weapons are used. We were reminded of the human toll of the devastation caused by chemical attacks and of the fact that we came together over many decades to build an international consensus banning these despicable weapons of war.

Sadly, today's meeting is not about any of that. Instead, it is yet another attempt by Russia to use the Security Council for political gains. It is an attempt to cast doubt on the attack in Salisbury, using phrases like "collective psychosis" and "propaganda war", and likening the media to a psychotropic substance that is used to manipulate the public. Russia also likened the response of any country that challenges the narrative of Russia to Nazi propaganda and Joseph Goebbels. This is not a tactic that is appropriate for this body. Let us remember the facts about what happened. We are discussing the egregious use of a military-grade nerve agent against two civilians in the United Kingdom — an attack that exposed hundreds of people, innocent bystanders and first responders to the effects of this agent. The fact that a permanent member of the Security Council was involved is especially appalling.

As the United States has made clear before, our support for the United Kingdom is unwavering, and we continue to stand in absolute solidarity with our British colleagues. We have stated previously, and do so again today, our firm belief that Russia is responsible for this chemical weapons attack on United Kingdom soil. Either Russia deliberately used this military-grade weapon or failed to declare and secure its stocks of this nerve agent. We strongly support the independent analysis of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) that is under way, as well as the criminal investigation of the United Kingdom into the use of chemical weapons on its sovereign territory, and believe those responsible for the attack must be held accountable.

The international community has rightly come together to express its outrage and take action. The United States, the United Kingdom, NATO and 27 other countries have expelled, all together, over 150 Russian intelligence officers. That is a testament to the grave concern that we and our partners share for the attempts of Russia to undermine international peace and security.

Meanwhile, Russia puts forward a series of conspiracy theories in an attempt to shift blame, with wild claims that the United Kingdom or the United States might be responsible. This disinformation and projection coming from our Russian colleagues is preposterous. Member States should not be fooled or led astray by these absurd efforts to dissemble from the facts. Russia is known to have developed military-grade nerve agents of the type used in the Salisbury attack. Russia has a well-documented record of conducting State-sponsored assassinations, including previously in the United Kingdom. High-ranking Russian officials have themselves made clear in public statements that defectors and so-called traitors are legitimate targets for assassination.

Yesterday, Russia tried to get the OPCW to adopt a decision that would have undermined its ongoing independent investigation into the Salisbury attack and that would have helped Russia to disguise its culpability. The members of the OPCW Executive Council overwhelmingly rejected Russia's proposal. Now Russia wants to try again at the Security Council. But the truth of Russia's involvement in the Salisbury attack remains, and the international community should remain united behind this truth. Once again, as Ambassador Haley said, if we do not change course now on chemical weapons, we will be fast approaching a new and far more dangerous reality for all of us. We must hold those who have used chemical weapons accountable and rebuild the global consensus that these weapons must never be used under any circumstances. As the Security Council, that is the goal we should be working to achieve, rather than using this Chamber to undermine the truth.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): Our position on the use of chemical weapons is well known, and we had an opportunity to reiterate that position yesterday (see S.PV.8221), one year after the chemical attack in Khan Shaykhun, Syria. It is absolutely important to underline again and again that the use of chemicals as weapons is unacceptable and constitutes a serious violation under international law.

However, 20 years after the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, we are seeing that this international regime is increasingly being undermined. We believe that it is in the best interests of all of us to do everything possible to maintain the use of chemical weapons as a taboo and to preserve the integrity of the regime for the sake of global peace and stability.

With regard to the Skripal case, we have been following the developments closely. We reiterate our sympathy and solidarity with the victims, as well as with the people and Government of the United Kingdom. The rationale for this is self-evident. The crime was committed on British soil. As we said last time, we hope that the necessary independent investigation will be conducted and also vetted, including through

consultation and the exchange of information on the basis of the relevant provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention, with a view to bringing those responsible to justice.

In this case as well, accountability is critical. We understand that the case has now been brought to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which is the appropriate international body to deal with the issue. There are indeed a number of issues surrounding the Salisbury incident that need to be clarified, and we note that upon the request of the Government of the United Kingdom, a technical mission of the OPCW was deployed recently and took samples from the individuals who were exposed to toxic chemicals. We note the updates by the Director-General of the OPCW yesterday at the special session of the Executive Council at The Hague. We hope that the report of the OPCW will eventually clarify those issues.

In the meantime, it is necessary that all the relevant parties cooperate with the OPCW and make every possible effort to resolve the issue in the spirit of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which clearly outlines what needs to happen in such cases. The lack of trust and the further deterioration of relations among major Powers on this issue will not help but further undermine the rules-based international order. It is very clear that we can address some of these difficult issues only if there is the necessary cooperation among us all and if we abide by the rules that we have set for ourselves in all transparency and fidelity to the truth.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): We are meeting today at the request of a member of the Security Council to discuss the 13 March letter (S/2018/218, annex) written by the British Prime Minister, which concerns a topic that we already met to discuss last month (see S/PV.8203). This meeting comes on the heels of a special meeting of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) held yesterday in The Hague on the same subject, at which Russia's attempt to have a draft decision adopted was overwhelmingly rejected. That meeting was held even before the OPCW had issued its findings concerning the incident at hand, thereby showing that yesterday's initiative, like today's, was a diversionary tactic in an attempt to sow confusion. It is therefore more important than ever to maintain a technical and objective approach to the issue.

Let us return to the facts. They are shocking, they are serious and they are unacceptable. On 4 March in Salisbury, a military-grade chemical agent, identified as belonging to a class of such agents known as Novichoks, was deployed in a public setting, targeting a former Russian intelligence officer and his daughter and contaminating a British police officer and civilians in the area. That was the first verified use of a chemical weapon in Europe since the end of the Second World War. It has been 100 years since the use of military-grade gas wrought destruction on European soil, during the Great War. France has stated at the highest levels of Government its full support for, and its unwavering solidarity with, the Government and the people of the United Kingdom. We renew them today.

While the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory at Porton Down has confirmed that the gas used belongs to the Novichok class and the United Kingdom continues to pursue its investigation in full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, I would like to reiterate France's full confidence in the work carried out by British investigators. France stands ready to make its expertise available to the United Kingdom, should it so desire. I also welcome the decision of the Director-General of the OPCW in responding positively to the British request to dispatch an assistance mission to the United Kingdom. The ongoing investigation must be completed independently and without interference. Given the information that the United Kingdom has communicated thus far, we share its assessment that there is no other plausible explanation for the attack than one involving Russia's responsibility. Although Russia advocates for cooperation, France was surprised by the Russian refusal to answer the United Kingdom's entirely legitimate questions. We call on Russia to shed light on matters of accountability with regard to the unacceptable Salisbury attack and notify the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons of any programmes that might not have been declared to the OPCW.

The ban on the use of chemical weapons is at the heart of the non-proliferation regime, which underpins our system of collective security. In that context, the full-scale re-emergence of those barbaric weapons in the Middle East, Asia and now in Europe cannot be tolerated. The taboo that we collectively established on the use of chemical weapons has been broken, including in Salisbury. That is an indication of how urgently we must reaffirm and consolidate the absolute prohibition

of chemical weapons. The normalization of the use of chemical weapons would signify a victory for barbarity over civilization and an unspeakable regression of the international order. That is why we cannot resign ourselves to such a fate, especially since — let us make no mistake — the normalization of the use of chemical weapons would create fertile ground for chemical terrorism, which we all fear, and, indeed, for which we would all pay the price.

France therefore will never tolerate allowing those who develop or use toxic agents to enjoy impunity. We recall our full support for existing institutions, in particular the OPCW. France will maintain its full commitment to supporting such institutions' activities with every resource at its disposal. That is the goal of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, which we launched last January. The gravity of what is at stake requires us to act. The use of chemical weapons by whomever and regardless of the circumstances runs equally contrary to our universal conscience and the most basic norms of international law.

Again, let us make no mistake: the use of chemical weapons poses a threat that could potentially ring the death knell of the very sustainability of the international regime on the non-proliferation of chemical weapons, which today is the most elaborate and successful of all international non-proliferation regimes. Allowing it to crumble without reacting would translate into accepting the weakening of the entire international regime on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which we built laboriously together over the past decades and which is the keystone of the international security architecture. We are therefore in need of Russia's sincere and resolved commitment. Russia must be part of the solution, not the problem. Russia, which was one of the pioneers of the international non-proliferation regime, should be one of its pillars.

Because the threat is existential for us all, combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction must be more than ever at the heart of the priorities of the Security Council. If there is one area in which the Council has the moral and political responsibility to come together to act, this is it. If there is one area where the Council's credibility is at stake, and where there is no place for tactical one-upmanship, this is it.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Since last month, China has very closely followed the Skripal affair in Salisbury. The spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry has repeatedly stated our position on the issue. China has also stated its principled positions at the Security Council and at the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). China notes that, at the just-held fifty-seventh meeting of the OPCW Executive Council the parties could not reach consensus on a joint investigation concerning this case. We also note that the parties concerned have so far failed to reach an outcome that is acceptable to all.

China firmly opposes the use of chemical weapons by any country, organization or person in any circumstance. Any party or actor using chemical weapons must be brought to justice. China believes that such issues should be dealt with in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and within the framework of the OPCW. China believes that it is urgent to discover the truth as soon as possible, carry out a comprehensive, impartial and objective investigation and draw conclusions based on hard evidence that will pass the litmus test of facts and history. China urges the countries concerned to carry out consultations, cooperate, avoid politicization and measures that might further exacerbate tensions and properly address the issue through dialogue, while adhering to the principles of equality and mutual respect.

At a time when the international community faces a plethora of challenges, all parties should abandon the Cold War mentality and group confrontation, work together to safeguard world peace, stability and tranquillity and jointly devote all efforts to building a new type of international relations based on mutual respect, equality, justice and win-win cooperation.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): Having heard the statements of the representatives of the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation, we also would like to share our observations on this issue.

Kazakhstan has a well-deserved international reputation as an unequivocal opponent of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons and poisonous substances. We categorically condemn any use of weapons of mass destruction as immoral, inhuman and contrary to the principles of humanity.

We express our deep concern about the tragic incident involving the possible use of a weapons-grade chemical agent on the territory of the United

Kingdom. We look forward to the publication of all concrete facts and evidence confirming the use of any kind of weapons-grade chemical agent as well as the involvement of individuals, non-State actors or States.

We count on a comprehensive, transparent and impartial investigation of the incident in accordance with the existing norms of international law, in particular on the basis of the provisions of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, and expect the international community to be provided with the conclusions and evidence.

We express our hope for the normalization of relations and the restoration of trust between the leading States, the preservation of the integrity of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and joint efforts to counter common threats to security, as well as the renunciation of the so-called bloc mentality. We call on all interested States to unite and to resolve all issues resulting from the incident in the United Kingdom in accordance with the norms of international law, in line with the spirit and principles of the Astana Commemorative Declaration of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): Sweden has been clear in condemning in the strongest terms the attempted murder of individuals on United Kingdom soil using a nerve agent. We stand fully behind the common European Union (EU) position on that matter. We share the assessment of the United Kingdom that it is highly likely that Russia is responsible and that there is no other plausible alternative explanation. We reiterate our strong solidarity with the United Kingdom, our close friend and EU partner, and our support for its ongoing investigation.

With regard to the chemical weapons use, as we have heard today, the United Kingdom is conducting its own independent police investigation. It is cooperating with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). That is in full conformity with the Chemical Weapons Convention. The United Kingdom has acted in the correct manner under the Convention. We underline the importance of respect for that process, in which the United Kingdom is cooperating with the OPCW, the independent international organization charged with overseeing the chemical-weapons ban. We look forward to being kept informed about the investigation, including the upcoming report regarding the sample analysis by the OPCW. We call on Russia to answer the questions posed by the United Kingdom.

Finally, let me once again underline Sweden's principled position on chemical weapons. Those abhorrent weapons are clearly prohibited under international law. All use of chemical weapons must be properly investigated and accountability must be ensured. We need to be vigilant in our efforts to ensure that the integrity of the chemical weapons ban is respected.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): Poland expresses its grave concern over the use of a nerve agant in an attempt to murder Mr. Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Ms. Yulia Skripal, on 4 March in Salisbury, United Kingdom. That reckless act also endangered the lives of innocent civilians.

In that regard, the Polish position was clearly expressed by the highest Polish authorities in the days following the attack in Salisbury. Poland undertook diplomatic steps to express its full solidarity with the British people and Government and condemned that unprecedented attack on the territory of the United Kingdom. We also aligned ourselves with the joint statements of the European Union that were made in The Hague during the most recent regular session of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and at its meeting yesterday.

Poland has always stood at the forefront of the efforts of the international community to contain the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The incident in Salisbury is yet another example of the violation of international law and of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). We remain strongly convinced that those responsible for the use of chemcial weapons must be identified and punished. Any such act cannot be left unanswered, since it undermines not only the basic sense of justice but also leads to the erosion of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime. As a result, it undermines the security of us all. We have full confidence in the investigation of the United Kingdom and we commend the transparency and continued information-sharing of the British Government in that regard.

At the same time, we welcome the ongoing cooperation between the United Kingdom and the OPCW in full compliance with the CWC. We look forward to a further discussion on the matter once the

results of the ongoing independent investigation by the team of experts of the OPCW are known.

We would like to recall that, on 22 March, the European Council unanimously agreed with the assessment of the United Kingdom — that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible for the attack in Salisbury and that there is no credible alternative explanation.

As we have already stated on other occasions, we support the decision of the United Kingdom to call on Russia to address the legitimate questions raised by the British Government and the international community and to provide an immediate, full and complete disclosure of its Novichok programme to the OPCW.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): We have listened carefully to the detailed statements made by the representatives of the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom on the incident that took place in Salisbury on Sunday, 4 March. It is truly regrettable that the Security Council has held meetings on two consecutive days to discuss the use of weapons of mass destruction in two different countries (see S/PV.8221).

The State of Kuwait is deeply concerned about the challenges facing the non-proliferation regime in our world today. We very much regret the attack perpetrated against Mr. Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, in the British city of Salisbury. The State of Kuwait stands with the United Kingdom and supports all the procedures and measures it has undertaken as part of the investigation into that case. We welcome the appeal to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to participate in the investigation as an impartial and independent international body specialized in that area in order to reveal the details of the incident. At the same time, we would like to express our sympathy and condolences to the victims. We wish Mr. Skripal and his daughter and those who were injured from the police and the public a speedy recovery.

The State of Kuwait holds a principled and firm position condemning and prohibiting the use, production, acquisition, stockpiling or retention of chemical weapons, as well as their direct or indirect transfer, in line with article I of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The State of Kuwait has been party to the Convention since 1997. We said the same during the urgent meeting convened by the Security Council on 14 March to discuss this issue (see S/PV.8203). The State of Kuwait believes in the importance of complying with international law and norms, and in the importance of maintaining international peace and security in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Kuwait urges all the relevant parties to cooperate in the ongoing investigations in this case through the OPCW, in accordance with the articles and provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): As we stated at the previous meeting on this topic (see S/PV.8203), Bolivia categorically rejects the use of chemical agents as weapons as an unjustifiable and criminal act because it is considered a serious crime against international law, peace and security. We express our concern about the challenges facing the non-proliferation regime. We reiterate the need for an independent, transparent, objective, impartial and depoliticized investigation, in accordance with the existing rules of international law, in particular within the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to clarify the events of 4 March.

We believe that cooperation between the relevant parties is essential for progress to be made, through the relevant diplomatic channels, in resolving this issue and, above all, in strengthening the non-proliferation regime.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): On 14 March, when we met in this Chamber at the request of our colleagues from the United Kingdom on the same issue of the chemical attack in Salisbury, United Kingdom (S/PV.8203), the first thing we did was to condemn the perpetration of that attack and to stand in solidarity with the victims and their families and with the Government of the United Kingdom. Today we begin our statement by reiterating the same message of condemnation.

Equatorial Guinea is closely following developments in relation to the incident involving the use of a chemical agent in Salisbury and hopes that the ongoing investigations will fully clarify the incident and that they will be comprehensive, fair and independent and in accordance with relevant international standards and procedures. The conclusions must be made public, and those responsible must be brought to justice.

Equatorial Guinea reiterates the hope that the relevant parties, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation, aware of their great responsibility as permanent members of the Security Council, will set a credible example for the international community of the peaceful settlement of disputes. It is important that at a

historic and crucial time like this, when the relevance of the international structures for harmonizing coexistence — which both parties have worked so hard to establish and preserve — is constantly being questioned, London and Moscow use their long-standing maturity and international political experience to manage this new crisis in a moderate, suitable and reasoned manner through direct contacts and in close collaboration with the international legal instruments and entities established for this purpose, such as the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We hope that this diplomatic crisis, which has escalated, can also be defused.

Equatorial Guinea opposes the development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of chemical weapons, as these activities contravene the Chemical Weapons Convention and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and we advocate for their total and complete prohibition and destruction.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): The Kingdom of the Netherlands supports the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom. I wish to make three points.

First, the chemical-weapon attack in Salisbury is unacceptable. Secondly, we fully support the investigation led by the United Kingdom. Thirdly, we call on the Russian Federation to fully cooperate with this ongoing criminal investigation.

As to my first point, on the unacceptability of the attack, during the previous meeting on this matter, on 14 March (see S/PV.8203), I expressed our shock at the reckless attack with a military-grade nerve agent on British soil. The Kingdom of the Netherlands strongly condemned that attack, in the Security Council and on many other occasions. The Kingdom of the Netherlands stands in full solidarity with United Kingdom.

As to my second point, on our support for the investigation, we underline that the perpetrators of this heinous act must face justice. The authorities of the United Kingdom are working, together with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), to achieve that end. At the meeting of the Executive Council of the OPCW in The Hague yesterday, Director-General Üzümcü confirmed that the United Kingdom had followed the correct procedure in this regard. We reiterate that we do not see any legitimate reason why anyone should try to delay, sidetrack, second-guess or discredit the criminal investigation being carried out by the United Kingdom authorities. We fully support the investigation led by the United Kingdom with the assistance of the OPCW.

As to my third point, on the need for Russian cooperation, on 22 March, the European Council condemned the attack in Salisbury in the strongest possible terms. It agreed with the assessment of the Government of the United Kingdom that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible for the attack and that there is no plausible alternative explanation. We therefore call on the Russian Federation to fully cooperate with the ongoing investigation and to provide full disclosure of its novichok programme to the OPCW.

In conclusion, any use of chemical weapons constitutes an unacceptable threat to international law, peace and security. I reiterate our call for full accountability for this horrific crime.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Côte d'Ivoire reiterates its principled position that all use of chemical weapons, in whatever form, in times of peace or in times of war, should be condemned. It stresses that it is imperative to shed full light on the use of chemical nerve agents in Salisbury, in collaboration with the relevant bodies, in particular the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). In that regard, my country urges all States to provide all necessary information to the OPCW with a view to assigning responsibility for the 4 March incident.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

Peru remains deeply concerned about the incident involving the use of a nerve agent in public spaces, which has seriously endangered the lives of at least three people in the United Kingdom. We wish to express our solidarity with the victims and with the population potentially exposed to the chemical agent in question.

Peru condemns all use of chemical weapons. We believe that such a practice constitutes, per se, a threat to international peace and security and a violation of the related non-proliferation regimes.

Accordingly, we reaffirm the importance of investigating the incident through the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and through the mechanisms and procedures established under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of

Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. In that regard, we believe that the results of the analyses carried out by the mission deployed by the OPCW at the request of the British Government should be known. In line with the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes, we urge the parties concerned to cooperate fully with the investigations, with a view to determining the responsibilities and sanctions that may result from the case.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Unfortunately, we heard nothing new from some of our colleagues, who continue unabashedly and unblinkingly to affirm Russia's guilt and demand that we shed light on the incident. We too would very much like to see the truth emerge, and we hope that the further we go, the more green shoots of truth will find their way towards the light. I would like to thank my Dutch colleague for his persistent proposal that we cooperate with the British, but I will most likely not do that, because the meaning attached to this proposal for cooperation is nothing like what we understand by it.

We are essentially being called on to respond to one question, which is "Admit that you did it." We answer, "We did not do it." To that, they say, "That is not enough. How did you do it?" We say, "Give us proof." They say, "No, but admit it anyway. It will be better that way." Can it really be that no one here understands that this is all a sort of theatre of the absurd? We have said repeatedly that the United Kingdom has not been following the Chemical Weapons Convention's procedures, and the Council can read about that in the memorandum that we have circulated.

I would like to note that today the Ambassador of the United Kingdom expressed her readiness to share information on the course of the investigation with Member States. We eagerly await that. We also hope that the information provided to us will be based on materials that are more convincing than the ones I showed the Council today. By the way, we found the explanation by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of the reasons and legal niceties for the use of the expression "highly likely" as an instrument of British justice — or in the context of British justice — very diverting. We will take it into consideration.

In conclusion, there is really nothing new under the sun. Once upon a time in Britain there lived a wonderful children's author — and not just for children — who was both a mathematician and a writer and who wrote a marvellous book entitled *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Here it is. I would like to read to the Council a short excerpt from the book about the trial of the Knave of Hearts. It is very short.

> "'There's more evidence to come yet, please your Majesty,' said the White Rabbit, jumping up in a great hurry; 'this paper has just been picked up.'"

Perhaps I should read the rest in English.

(*spoke in English*)

> "'What's in it?' said the Queen.
>
> "'I haven't opened it yet,' said the White Rabbit, 'but it seems to be a letter, written by the prisoner to — to somebody.'
>
> "'It must have been that,' said the King, 'unless it was written to nobody, which isn't usual, you know.'
>
> "'Who is it directed to?' said one of the jurymen.
>
> "'It isn't directed at all,' said the White Rabbit; 'in fact, there's nothing written on the *outside*.'...
>
> "'Are they in the prisoner's handwriting?' asked another of the jurymen.
>
> "'No, they're not,' said the White Rabbit, 'and that's the queerest thing about it.' (The jury all looked puzzled.)
>
> "'He must have imitated somebody else's hand,' said the King. (The jury all brightened up again.)
>
> "'Please your Majesty,' said the Knave, 'I didn't write it, and they can't prove I did: there's no name signed at the end.'
>
> "'If you didn't sign it,' said the King, 'that only makes the matter worse. You *must* have meant some mischief, or else you'd have signed your name like an honest man.'
>
> "There was a general clapping of hands at this: it was the first really clever thing the King had said that day ...
>
> "'That's the most important piece of evidence we've heard yet,' said the King, rubbing his hands ...

"'Let the jury consider their verdict,' the King said, for about the twentieth time that day.

"'No, no!' said the Queen. 'Sentence first — verdict afterwards.'"

(*spoke in Russian*)

Does that remind you of anything, Mr. President? But if Council members think this has to do only with fairytales from a previous century — which are very relevant ones, incidentally — I would like to show them one more thing, an article from today's *Independent*, entitled "Whether we can prove Moscow's involvement in the Skripal case or not is irrelevant". Here is one brief quote from it.

(*spoke in English*)

"The Russians' response to all of this is to say "prove it", as if in a court of law. Even on a legal test such as being beyond reasonable doubt or on the balance of probabilities, the Russians are plainly culpable."

I rest my case.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the United Kingdom has asked to make a further statement.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I will not detain my colleagues for very long. There is another very good quote from Lewis Carroll in *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There*: "Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast." I think that is the quote that suits my Russian colleague best. I just wanted to say that we are of course committed to keeping the Council updated. We will share with the Council, at the Council's request, as much information as we can, as and when we have it, and in accordance with developments.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.